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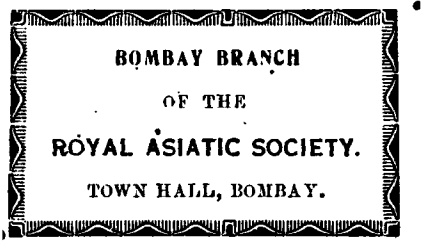

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MADONNA AND SAINTS. ATTRIBUTED TO GIOTTO.

In the lower church of Assisi.

GIOTTO

BY HARRY QUILTER

EC024
ac

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET
1880

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LONDON: R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR,
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TO THE MEMORY

OF

ELIZABETH HARRIET QUILTER

THIS ESSAY IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED

BY

HER YOUNGEST SON.

PREFACE.

MY only object in writing these few words of preface is to state plainly the share of originality which belongs to this essay. This is rendered necessary because the subject of the work has occupied the attention of many authors of far greater ability and experience than that of which the present writer can boast.

The extent, then, to which this essay is original is as follows:—The facts of Giotto's life have been taken from Vasari's *Lives of the Painters* and compared with those given by all later writers on the same subject. As these later authors are mentioned throughout the book, wherever their opinions are quoted, I need not give a list of them here. The descriptions of the pictures and sculptures of Giotto are, in all cases, written by myself after careful study of the originals. In no case whatever is an opinion expressed upon the merit or meaning of a work which I have not personally examined; this applies to all pictures and statues mentioned in the essay as well as to those of Giotto.

The descriptions of Padua, Assisi, and Florence were written on the spot, and the vignettes of the two former towns are reduced from sketches made by myself on purpose for the present work.

The fresco of the *Unknown Madonna*, formerly attributed to Giotto, and still ascribed to him by the monks of Assisi, is reproduced here, by chromo-lithography, from a water-colour drawing made by me at Assisi in the spring of last year—its only use is to show readers the kind of colouring prevalent in Giotto's work.

Lastly, for all criticisms, theories, and illustrations given in the essay, I am alone responsible, except in cases where the name of the author is subjoined in a footnote.

THE WHITE HOUSE, CHELSEA,
May, 1880.

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"As in passing through life we learn many new things, so do we forget many old things, and gradually the remembrance of them is lost from among men. Therefore those persons do not reason well who do not study to perpetuate useful things by writing, because in such case posterity will hereafter seek in vain for their origin, perfection, and use."—*Tambroni.*

"Such as are ignorant of things done and past before themselves had any being continue still in the estate of children, able to speak and behave themselves no otherwise; and even within the bounds of their native countries (in respect of knowledge or manly capacity) they are no more than well-seeming dumb images."—*From the Dedication of an anonymous translation of Boccacio's Novels, &c.* 1634.

"And so it is with all truths of the highest order: they are separated from those of average precision by points of extreme delicacy, which none but a cultivated eye can in the least feel, and to express which all words are absolutely meaningless and useless. Two lines are laid on canvas, or cut on stone: one is right and another wrong. There is no difference between them appreciable by the compasses—none appreciable by the ordinary eye—none which can be pointed out if it is not seen. One person feels it, another does not; but the feeling or sight of the one can by no words be communicated to the other. That feeling and that sight have been the reward of years of labour."—*John Ruskin.* 1853.

"I offer this little work as long as I live to the correction of those who are more learned. If I have done wrong in anything I shall not be ashamed to receive their admonitions; and if there be anything which they like, I shall not be slow to furnish more."—*Wilhelm of Bamberg, circa* 1000 A.D.

GIOTTO.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE biographies in this series* are intended to help in the preservation of the memories of those great artists, who, leaving to the world the legacies of their genius, have not all died, but live to this hour in the far-reaching influence their works exert. That such men lived, worked, and perished, is almost the sum of knowledge that most of us can boast of with regard to them; we here try to add the simple story of their lives, and perhaps a few touches of description as to the friends they loved, the country they lived in, and the times in which they worked; so that, perhaps, they may become in some measure to us, not only wielders of the chisel and the brush, but men like ourselves, with moments of frailty as well as exaltation, with lives more or less difficult through fading ambitions and frequent failure, but nevertheless bound to us by the tie of a common humanity, and claiming our sympathy and love, not only for the beauty they have left us, but because they also carried the burden, and fought the fight that we are fighting to-day. If it be true, as George Eliot tells us, that the aspect of affairs for the race, is largely

* This essay was originally written for, and will ultimately appear in, the series of "Illustrated Biographies of the Great Artists," published by Messrs. Sampson Low, and Co.

altered by the influence of "those who have lived faithfully hidden lives, and rest in unvisited tombs," it is none the less true, that there is some danger in regarding those whose achievements are of historic magnitude, as if they belonged to a separate order of humanity, and were removed alike from its every-day joys and sorrows; and we shall gain a knowledge by no means to be despised, if we once bring fairly home to our consciousness the fact that the seeds of greatness flourish in no other soil than that which we all possess; that the divine light of genius glorifies natures that are subject to the like joys, sorrows, and passions as our own, nay, that even, "like the fierce light that beats upon a throne," it often reveals faults of which the weakest of us might well be ashamed, as well as virtues of which we are all capable. It is not by elevating the great to a passionless region of undisturbed supremacy of life and action, that we show them our truest reverence, or learn from them our most worthy lesson, but by seeing them as they were in sober truth. If we would knit into firmer unison the varying struggles, failures, and triumphs of our great brotherhood, we must learn to look upon genius, not as some cold, unapproachable excellence that finds its work in alien spheres of imagination and action, but rather as a keener insight into the truths of thought and feeling, with its relations to the everyday aspects of life, no less than to its most exalted phases.

It will not be wasted time to the busy dwellers in the England of the nineteenth century, to be led back in spirit to those old Italian days when as yet civilisation dozed upon the stream of time, when the Arno and the Tiber ran their course unspanned by other bridges than those grey stone ones that remain to this day, when under the shadows of the Umbrian mountains, the rushes of Thrasymene wavered not with the rush of the locomotive, but the sighing of the breezes, and on the hills of Assisi the brethren of St. Francis chanted their

earliest anthems, and took their first solemn vows of poverty and obedience. It will not be wasted time, if a thrill of kindly sympathy can be raised within us for that old life without whose struggles our fuller knowledge could never have existed, when the world was plainly divided into soldiers and scholars, rulers and ruled, men of action and men of thought, when the good was encrusted with no uncertainties, and the evil mitigated by no doubts, and all the lives of men were poured along a deeper and narrower channel than now. Though we should not regret, we should still remember kindly those times and all that they wrought for us, and the lessons that they teach, though our lives be cast in a far different mould.

It is not possible now for a new regenerator of art to cause a new departure for art by plain reference to natural fact, as did the subject of this book six hundred years ago; but how long has it been impossible? For little more than twenty years! Strange as it may seem to many of our readers, a large portion of the very best art of the present day is based upon principles which were derived from the works of Giotto and his immediate successors, and such men as Millais, Holman Hunt, Rossetti, and Burne Jones, would never have painted as they have done,* had it not been for the Umbrian shepherd boy, whose story we are about to tell. The quality which they found in Giotto's work, of simple unswerving truth to the facts of nature and life, this it is which lies at the root of all their work, this it is which they sought to find in vain in the pictures of later artists, however superior such might be, and were, in beauty of form and refinement of colouring. Forced and eccentric as the work of the modern pre-Raphaelites at first seemed, it was indubitably based upon a sound principle—the principle of painting what they saw, and consequently what they believed in, rather than what they might have seen. They took up the theory that nature was

* See *Pre-Raphaelitism*, by John Ruskin. 1862.

essentially beautiful and, carrying it a step further than was usual, drew the conclusion that if they were absolutely faithful to nature, their work could not be ugly.*

It is hardly too much to say that this principle has gone far to effect as great a change in modern art as the practice of Giotto effected in that of six hundred years ago. Even those artists who have been most antagonistic to the pre-Raphaelite movement, as it is called, have had their practice modified by it; and though they have continued to uphold the necessity for following rules of art, conventionally graceful arrangement of line, and contrasts of light and shade as the chief elements of pictorial beauty, have still been forced by their antagonists into bringing their works more into accordance with natural fact.

Upon this point, however, this is not the place to dwell; it is sufficient to bear in mind that the influence of Giotto, of which we have spoken, is one which is even now modifying our art, and that therefore it will be no small help to the

* In this connection the following quotation from Mr. Ruskin's description of the origin of English pre-Raphaelitism may be found interesting. He is here speaking of Messrs. Millais, Hunt, and Rossetti: "Pupils in the same schools receiving precisely the same instruction, which for so long a time has paralysed every one of our painters; these boys agree in disliking to copy the antique statues set before them. They copy them as they are bid, and they copy them better than anybody else; they carry off prize after prize, and yet they hate their work. At last they are admitted to study from the life, they find the life very different from the antique, and they say so. Their teachers tell them the antique is the best, and they must not copy the life. They agree among themselves that they like the life and that copy it they will. They do copy it faithfully, and their masters forthwith declare them to be lost men. Their fellow-students hiss them whenever they enter the room. They cannot help it, they join hands and tacitly resist both the hissing and the instruction. Accidentally a few prints of the works of Giotto, a few casts from that of Ghiberti, fall into their hands, and they see in them something which they never saw before; something eternally and everlastingly true."

right understanding of present pictures and picture theories, to understand clearly what reform it was that Giotto introduced into Italian painting, and how it comes about that after so long an interval of time his work has come to form a sort of rallying point for young English artists of our own day.

There is still another reason for dwelling upon the work of this old pre-Raphaelite painter; which is, that there is one considerable section of the English art-world who unite in declaring the essential and necessary superiority of the Venetian and Florentine painting, say of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and in speaking in despairing terms of the hopeless ugliness of modern civilisation. I often wonder whether those worthy elders, had they lived in the times of Giotto, would not have referred in terms of despairing eulogy to the old Roman mosaics of the fifth and sixth centuries, and contrasted their beauty with the innovating tendency of the shepherd painter, who actually inserted portraits of living people into his sacred pictures, and vulgarised the most holy subjects by the insertion of personages who looked actually glad, or surprised, or sorry, just as they might have done in actual life!

But it surely is not the case that art alone, of all the great influences of the world, reached its apogee in the Middle Ages, and that nothing henceforth remains for it but stagnation or decline. Can we believe that progress will go on in all else, and that art alone is doomed to stand still for ever, like a sort of Lot's wife, looking backward to Venice and Florence, as she to Sodom? Such cannot be the belief of those who hold that progress is not the result of an accidental conjunction of fortunate circumstances, but rather that of an universal law of nature, which ordains that we move for ever forward, though the steps of our advance are rarely perceptible. It is possible that all the older forms of art must die—as they seem to be dying now, of inanition—

ere the fuller art be born, but nevertheless the fuller art must come in its season, and whatever be its distinguishing characteristic, this at least is certain, that it will be more in unison with the facts of nature and life, as we now know them, than a reflection of the faded beauties of ancient story. So that we are justified in looking with special interest upon the works of the man who first asserted the principle of the broad relation of art to life, and painted legends of the Madonna, or whatever were his subjects, not in the ancient symbolical manner, but as incidents that happened in the work-a-day world, and were witnessed by spectators, such as might have really existed, some of whom were curious, some scornful, and some indifferent.

Whatever changes art may undergo in the future, our debt will be none the less to those who have made it such as we know it now, to those early workers who struggled against difficulties and solved them for us, and whose imperfections formed the groundwork of our fuller knowledge. And chief of these, as the first who introduced a rational and verifiable manner of painting, is Giotto Bondone, the pupil of Cimabue, who not only cast on one side the arbitrary forms of representation handed down from the Byzantine artists, but, as we have said, introduced into his pictures the element of natural life, and carrying his reform into the very heart of his subject, adopted for his characters not only appropriate action and natural positions, but made the whole picture tell a story of human life, instead of making it a composition of more or less graceful lines and variegated colours.

This will be treated of in subsequent portions of this essay, it is sufficient to say here that painters were not slow to follow the example thus set, nor the public to appreciate the change. It was so sudden and of such marked importance, the advantages gained were so great, that the new method of painting, completely vanquished the

traditional one, even in the artist's own lifetime; and with the whole weight of tradition, and with the Church's dislike to innovation to contend with, it succeeded in permanently establishing itself in public favour.

From the time of Giotto's early manhood to the death of Titian, the history of painting is mainly the history of the principles which the former artist taught his pupils and exemplified in his works.

Even in landscape painting, which was hardly if at all practised in his time, the advance made by Giotto was remarkable, as he substituted for the ordinary conventional background, scenes in which nature was represented faithfully, though with many shortcomings of perspective and errors of proportion such as were inevitable in a first attempt. However, for two hundred years afterwards the advance in landscape was very slight,* and in some respects his designs of leaves and foliage, especially some of those in the sculptures on the Campanile at Florence, are still worthy of our admiration for their fidelity, no less than for their beauty.

And lastly, to conclude this introductory chapter, it may be worth while to attempt to answer the question of what analogy we can find between the work of Giotto and that of the present day, and what lessons we can derive from the former. Now that we have had our road cleared of the many difficulties that beset the old Italian artist, have we any left that he can teach us how to master, and if so, what are they?

The answer is a very simple one. In his time art was suffering its restriction to a certain class of subjects, the

* "From Giotto's old age to the youth of Raphael the advance consists principally in two great steps: the first, that distant objects were more or less invested with a blue colour; the second, that trees were no longer painted with a black ground but with a rich dark brown, or dark green one."—*John Ruskin.*

religious; and a certain way of representing those subjects, the conventional. This restriction had engendered a purely formal and unemotional art, and an almost total suppression in pictures of the elements of fancy and the realisation of natural fact. In the present day, as in the thirteenth century, art suffers from restrictions, the difference being, that instead of being imposed from without, they are imposed from within, or in other words, they are developments from her own practice. The effect of the great advance in art made in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries has been to make modern artists look at nature in a particular way, *i.e.*, in the manner in which the painters of that day originated; and instead of aiming at beauty through truth to nature and life, they rather aim at it through an imitation of the works of Raphael and Titian. The perfection of *technique* reached by those masters and their contemporaries, has raised the admiration of all later painters to such a degree that they have exalted the methods of this Renaissance painting into a religion, and seek to find in the laws of chiaroscuro, composition, balance, and harmony of colour, which they can deduce from the pictures of that period, the source of the inspiration that renders those works immortal. Thus art is still in service, in service to itself; it has but burst one set of fetters that it might "gather the links of the broken chain to fasten them proudly round her." No longer bound by superstition and formalism; she is bound by bonds of her own making, and falls down, like Narcissus of old, in worship of her own fair face. Indeed the present error is really a deeper one than that which Giotto vanquished, for throughout all the degradation of art in the early centuries of the Christian era, there was one principle which had been clung fast to, and that was, that pictures should represent things worthy to be represented; it is true that the range was narrowed and its treatment governed by

rule, but it may be doubted whether this was not preferable to our present indifference of what it is that is painted, or whether anything should be painted at all.

For it must be noticed that many modern writers on art seem to hold, and artists to exemplify, the principle, that one subject is as good as another; in fact, that the treatment is everything, the meaning of the work wholly subsidiary. Art no longer exists to depict worthily worthy things, but rather like an æsthetic Blondin balances itself solemnly on a tight-rope of its own construction, seeming to pride itself upon its removal from the vulgar crowd, and moves onward with abstracted gaze, heedless of the oft repeated cries of "Come down."

Yet now, as in the older centuries, men sorrow and hope, succeed and fail, and woman's beauty is as fair, and her heart as tender, as under the Italian sunshine six hundred years ago; there may be at the present hour in the cottages of England, as then mid the hills of Vespignano, peasants' children in whom the inspiration of art is struggling for utterance, needing but the chance that Cimabue gave to Giotto, to give to mankind new lessons of beauty and truth. In a word, now as then, the subjects of art and its power are the same as they have ever been, and men have not ceased to be the same because the fashion of their dress is changed, and they no longer display their emotions with the frank egotism of the Middle Ages. And, as has been said, the history of Giotto is the history of the man who first in painting gave expression to all the diverse emotions of men, who refused to believe that traditional arrangements of line, and profuseness of colouring, could be efficient substitutes for the vital facts of nature and life; who taught that painting is but one of the means by which man speaks to man, and that therefore the words it says are as important, perhaps more so, as the way in which they are said. So I

repeat the history of this old pre-Raphaelite is doubly important to us at this day, not only as the founder of the great schools of Italian painting, but as the energetic reformer in whose works our artists may find an exhortation to cast away formulas for facts, and rely for the beauty and attractiveness of their pictures, more upon their correspondence with nature, than their subservience to artistic tradition.

CHAPTER II.

ART IN ITALY IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

IF we would gain a true and adequate conception of the works and merit of any painter, it is necessary for us not only to examine his special productions, but to become in some measure acquainted with the state in which art was during his time. And not only is it necessary to take into account the actual amount of progress then manifested in one particular branch, such as painting, but to consider also the tendencies of the age, if we would separate the influence exercised by the artist's work, and define its true significance. Therefore readers will not think it irrelevant to the right telling and understanding of the life of Giotto, if they are first asked to consider for a short time the condition of art in the year 1276; and in order to thoroughly comprehend this condition, we must for a moment carry our thoughts back a thousand years further still, and think of those days when art and paganism flourished side by side in the Grecian republic.

It would be difficult at any time, impossible in the short space at our disposal, to explain the peculiar action and reaction of Greek art upon Greek religion; we must content ourselves with noting the fact that the two were absolutely inseparable—that the religion owed its influence over men's minds in no small degree to the power of art, is as indisputable as that art gained enormously in dignity and strength

by being considered as the greatest exponent of religion, and by all its most important achievements being consecrated to that service. But if the Greek art was on the one hand indissolubly connected with the national religion, it was, on the other, no less connected with the national life. If the wisdom of Zeus, the pride of Juno, and the tenderness of Venus ornamented one side of the amphora, the struggles of the chase and the contests of the gymnasia adorned the other; nor did it seem to the people that there was anything extraordinary in thus mingling the doings of their neighbours, and the actions of their gods. Why! their gods, after all, were but neighbours of a higher order, and had even been known to succumb to the craft or bravery of men. The barrier between seen and unseen scarcely existed; but nature passed through almost imperceptible gradations, from the dryad of the woodland, to the ruler of Olympus. Had their religion, their art, and their life stood apart, as, unhappily, religion, art, and life stand apart now, the rise of Christianity could never have produced the withering effect upon all works of imagination which we know occurred; for it could not have taken away, at one blow, both the motives and the subjects of art, however it might have changed the mode of their representation; nor would Christianity have been opposed to it in like manner, had it not clearly perceived that it was one of the great instruments in the hands of the pagan priests. Unable to pervert to spiritual conceptions an art whose only conception of spiritual things was the perfection of bodily ones, ascetic Christianity had no choice but to discourage the practice of art altogether, and this is what actually happened. Gradually as the study of the nude figure was abandoned, the ignorance of the artists of the real outlines of the human form increased; and gradually, as the first broad Christian theory of fellowship and brotherhood, faded through the help of the priest into a stern,

asceticism, enforced by Church tradition, all representations of vigour and manly beauty were considered to verge upon the profane, till at last we find in the work of the fifth to the tenth centuries, an almost total absence of all study of either nature or man; the former being totally disregarded, the latter represented under rude types, which were repeated from age to age without variety or improvement. Splendour of material and colouring were made to atone for poverty of conception and absence of thought, and the great art of those ages was one which the Greeks had only considered worthy to decorate the floors of their palaces. This art of mosaic, which about the fourth century * began to supersede painting in tempera and encaustic, was peculiarly fitted to be the servant of asceticism. In the course of its practice all the flowing lines of drapery became harsh and stiff, the limbs lost their suppleness and movement, the face its expression and life, and in fact the whole picture became less a representation of an occurrence, than a type to recall some subject to the mind. If we remember that many of the facts of the Christian religion were such as almost to defy absolute representation, we shall discover another reason for the adoption of this work. It is to be noted that, according to Pliny, mosaic began to be in vogue in Rome about 170 years before Christ. Kugler asserts that this art was an invention of the Alexandrian age, but in this he appears to be mistaken, and it is more probable that the Greeks received it from Persia and Assyria (through their Ægean colonies and the histories of Phœnician merchants), in which countries the art seems to have been of great antiquity.† The finest examples of these wall mosaics are

* See Kugler's *Handbook of Painting*, edited by Lady Eastlake, 1874, pp. 17 and 18, for a description of the origin of mosaic art.

† For origin of mosaic work see Pliny xxv., xxxiii., xxxv. See also the *Iconographic Encyclopædia*, by Heck, translated from the German by Spencer F. Baird, New York, 1851, vol. ii. p. 77, &c., and Fosbroke's *Cyclopædia of Antiquities*, 1840.

to be found in Rome and Ravenna, and, at a later date, in the decoration of St. Mark's, at Venice, to which we shall hereafter have occasion to refer. Another kind of art of great importance at this time was Illumination, the earliest traces of which are found towards the close of the second century, when the present form of leaves sewn together at the back superseded the rollers which had been previously used. The first embellishments were simple enlargements and variety of colouring in the letters; from this, the advance to borders and illustrative designs was comparatively rapid.* The earliest examples of importance remaining at the present day, are the *Dioscorides*, in the library at Vienna, and the *Virgil*, in the Vatican, both of which are supposed to be of the fourth century.

The influence of tradition, asceticism, and sacerdotalism, acted in a precisely similar way to restrain the art of illumination, as it did to destroy that of painting and sculpture. At first the Byzantine school of illuminators greatly surpassed those of the Western world, but, as Humphreys says, "They belonged to a sinking and not a rising civilisation, and we find them gradually deteriorating after the tenth century, and never originating a new style or gradually progressing to more intricate or beautiful treatment of their subjects, but on the contrary, uninfluenced by the change and progress that was at work in Western Europe, they plodded on in the traditional track; the ancient costume and the bright gold of their miniatures of the fifth century still continuing in practice to the later period of Byzantine illumination; and even in the year 1846, M. Papetie found the monks of Mount Athos decorating portions of their monastery with figures of the apostles and evangelists of the old approved pattern, and

* See *Art of Illumination*, 1844, and *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages*, 1849. By Henry Noel Humphreys.

painted on the traditional gold grounds, the exact counterpart of those of the fifth century.*

We have spoken of the Byzantine mosaic and illumination, and have only to mention their architecture to complete our account, for it must be remembered that almost every artistic impulse of these centuries was due either mediately or immediately to the influence of Constantinople, which, however stationary, or even declining in its civilisation, was yet the great centre of enlightenment.

It is quite impossible I believe to give in a few lines any description of the peculiarities of Byzantine architecture, dependent as that style was upon a combination of the Grecian, Roman, and Arabian methods of building. We know that one element in the style was the combination of the round dome with the ancient temple, and that the shape and size of the building was in the first place determined by the necessities of its worship. As is pointed out by Professor Brown,† "the Christian mode of worship required a style of building considerably different from the heathen temple. Instead of a mere sacristry for the priest, the term at which the pomp of processions ended, and in the front of which, under the vault of the sky, sacrifices were performed, shelter was now required for the multitude offering their prayers, according to ritual, and receiving instruction from their pastors. New places for sacred edifices were therefore required, and those of great dimensions, with ample space and superior accommodation within the interior." The result of this demand led to the selection and adaptation of the most suitable buildings which were then available, and these happened to be the ancient basilicas or halls of justice, of which, as they are the origin of all Christian

* For more on this subject see the *Nouveau Traité de Diplomatie* of the Benedictines.

† Brown's *Sacred Architecture*, 1845, pp. 24, 25.

churches, the following description may be interesting to some of my readers: * "A basilica was a public edifice of the ancient Romans, consisting of an oblong interior divided in its width into three divisions by two rows of columns. At the upper end it had a large niche or tribune, where courts of justice were held. The basilica was a place of general resort, like an exchange of modern times. These places also became to be used by the Christians for their place of meeting, and afterwards churches were built on the model of the basilicæ, and the name of basilicæ is still affixed to the principal churches in Rome. To a building of this kind there was added a transept, to give a cruciform shape; and so the general plan of our churches came to be adopted."

If the exigencies of room and haste led to the transposition of these ancient exchanges into churches, and fixed the form of the Christian architecture of the future; the zeal of the new faith also determined in no small measure the style of adornment of their interiors. For, again, the haste for their decoration was so great that the importation of marble from the quarries nearly twenty miles from Rome was too slow a method for the Christians to adopt, and they "immediately commenced the work of demolition among the classic edifices of antiquity erected by the pagan Romans, chiefly for the value of the materials." † This was probably the origin of the method of incrustation, which forms such a remarkable feature in the Byzantine architecture, and indeed is, according to Ruskin, its most typical feature. The process of changing a basilica into a cathedral being somewhat akin to that of changing a barrack into a palace, the rich materials had to be used as sparingly as possible, in order to make them sufficient for the concealment of the original poverty of the structure, and this naturally led to the blocks of marble being divided into thin

* Brown's *Sacred Architecture*, 1845.

† Cadell's *Italy*, vol. ii. p. 339.

slabs, in order to gain as much surface decoration as possible, and caused also the delicate proportions of symmetry and uniformity in the Grecian temples to be neglected, since the proportions had to be taken as they were found, and made the best of. If we then add to this first origin of the Christian architecture, the influences which were likely to attend upon its transference to the East, we easily perceive how its more elaborate decorations and peculiarities arose. The employment of coloured marbles, which arose first from the necessity of making use of the scattered fragments of the ancient temples, was continued, through a love for the picturesqueness of the effect produced; the elements of size, proportion, and simplicity, on which the structure of the Grecian temples had been founded, once lost sight of, those of variety and intricacy took their place. Eastern magnificence covered the walls with gold and colours, while the necessities of excluding the fierce sunshine of the East, narrowed the windows, and produced the chequered gloom, through which the lustre of the golden crucifix, and the silver lamp, alone shone clearly. Such was the rise of the Byzantine architecture, which, however lacking it may be in strictness of taste and correctness of method, has always been powerful over men's minds to an almost unparalleled extent.*

And in this architecture and decoration everything was subordinated to the religious impression; from its meanest detail, to the very shape of the church itself, everything was a type of the Christian faith and hope, and was neither valuable nor precious, save as the symbol of the unseen divinity. It can be easily imagined how quickly art sank wholly under this influence, and became the mere servant of the popular superstition. As in ancient Greece, so in Byzantium, the priests used art for their great lever to move the imaginations

* For a very interesting description of this feature in Byzantine work see *The Stones of Venice*, by John Ruskin, vol. ii.

of the people; the difference being only that as the religion was of a different kind, so was the art. This world was a hospital; "health and heaven were to come";* that was practically the belief of these early ages of the Christian Church. It is indeed the theory of the Church at the present day. So art no longer sought to find her gods in an apotheothised humanity, but substituted arbitrary types for the things unspeakable; thus a hand reaching down from the sky typified the Almighty; a dove was the recognised symbol of the spirit, and so on.†

And as the Church gradually encroached more and more upon the lives of the people, and as with its increasing influence it asserted its supremacy on every domain of human life; so it extended its power of repression upon the subjects as well as upon the methods of art. Not only was the barrier raised against all representations of bodily strength, grace, and beauty, but even in the delineation of sacred subjects, the artist was forbidden to render them in any way human by using his powers of conception and modification. Hardly even was a variation of grouping or the introduction of a figure allowed in the treatment of the religious events; and for hundreds of years St. John and the Virgin stood in the same attitude, at the right and at the left hand of the cross, and Christ, in the centre of the picture, gazed upon the spectators with the placid eyes of divine power, of which no agony could avail to dim the Godhead. To the end of the eleventh century all expression of pain upon the face of the Saviour was entirely absent, absolutely forbidden by the priesthood. He was depicted as standing upon the cross with erect head and widely open eyes,‡ and in

* Ruskin's *Crown of Wild Olive*, Introduction.

† For an account of Christian Symbolism, see Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*.

‡ See *A New History of Painting in Italy*. By J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle, 1864; vol. i. chap. 4.

aspect, as Crowe says, "either erect or menacing." While this spirit of representation continued, it was manifestly impossible for art to improve. All study of the nude discouraged, if not forbidden; all the worth of material beauty despised, all originality of conception sternly interdicted, and all expression of human emotion considered as irreligious, the unhappy painters had no opening left them for anything but slavish imitations of their predecessors. It would take me too long to show how this anti-naturalism of the Church came to be in some degree modified; probably one of the chief causes was the recognition by the priesthood of the progressive tendency of the times, and the consequent relaxation of the harsh restrictions which had fixed the limits of pictorial art. In every age the essential principle of the Catholic religion in its dealings with secular matters has been an adoption of the tendencies which it could not repress, and the endeavour to turn them to its own advancement. It may well be that the growing naturalism of pictorial representation from the twelfth century to the end of the thirteenth was sanctioned by the Church from this cause. In any case, during this period religious art took its first hesitating steps in the right direction. Slowly the crucifixes represented the Saviour with downcast head and closed eyes, and his body no longer stood erect upon the cross, but swayed outward in the pain of death.

Such was the state of painting at the beginning of the thirteenth century, purely devoted to religious subjects, and representing those subjects according to established forms—influenced chiefly by the traditions of ancient art which were received from the schools of Byzantium, but fettered by those traditions being embodied in Christian types, and complicated by the introduction of Church symbolism. Thus, for instance, in the treatment of the drapery in the mosaics executed at Venice by the Greek, Apollonius, something of

the ancient manner may be observed through all the figures; but the rigidity of the lines, the meagreness of the bodies, and the lifelessness of the composition are entirely due to the influences of asceticism which prevailed in the early Church.

Sculpture was in an identical position till the celebrated pulpit at Pisa was made by Niccola Pisano in 1260; in which the same imitation of the antique, combined in a lesser degree with the restraining influences above mentioned, forms a nearer approach to the Gothic naturalism of Giotto than we can trace elsewhere. Pisano's gift in design was a far lower one than Giotto's, though he was much greater in sculptural skill, for in his works the new element is not so much the rejection of tradition for the sake of nature, as the partial rejection of ascetic religion for the sake of imitating the antique. It is true that by this adherence to the form of Grecian sculpture he far exceeds the works of his contemporaries and predecessors of the Middle Ages, but that is only because the schools he imitated had studied nature so devotedly; there is in his work much of the spirit of the antique, but little of the spirit of nature on which the antique was founded. According to Crowe,* in the later work of Niccola Pisano there is a reference to natural models observable, but I have not seen the pulpit at Siena of which he is speaking; and it is notable that there were several pupils of Pisano engaged upon this work, and that Crowe admits that where the references to nature occur, precisely there "is the master's ability least visible," so it is at least possible that they may not have been the work of his own hand. Many other architects and sculptors of the thirteenth century there are;

* Lord Lindsay, in his *History of Christian Art*, asserts that in painting, the schools of Giotto, Siena, and Bologna spring immediately from the work of Niccola Pisano. Vol. ii., p. 113. See, for an account of his pupils, pages 115 *et seq.* of vol. ii.

but we cannot spare space to do more than mention their names. Arnolfo, Giovanni Pisano, Fra Guglielmo, and the three Florentines, Lapo, Donato, and Goro are the chief; their doings are described by Crowe in his chapter on the progress of sculpture in the first volume of the *History of Painting in Italy*, in which there is a full description of the manner of each, and an examination of the questionable statements of Vasari concerning them.

What is interesting with regard to the subject of our biography in respect of these sculptors is, that they were the forerunners of that revival of the study of nature, in which he subsequently played the most important part. It does not appear to me that they actually attempted, as is asserted by Crowe, "to graft on the imitation of the antique a study of nature," but rather that their imperfect naturalism arose from a misrepresentation of the antique work, and an almost total rejection of the Byzantine formalism. It is a curious example of Ruskin's dictum that the energy of growth in any people may be almost directly measured by their passion for sculpture or the drama, that just at the time when Italy was beginning that splendid forward movement which crowned, with a blaze of light, the dark mountain of the Middle Ages; just then sculpture should have as it were leapt into full life after a sleep of nearly a thousand years.

According to Lanzi* the improvement of mosaic followed that of sculpture, and a Franciscan friar named Fra Jacopo Torriti, surpassed all the contemporary Greek and Roman workers in mosaics. "On examining what remains of his works at Santa Maria Maggiore at Rome, one can hardly believe that it is the production of so rude an age, did not history compel us to believe it. It appears probable that he took the ancients for his models, and deduced

* *History of Painting in Italy*, vol. i. p. 9; Roscoe's translation, 1828.

his rules from the more chaste specimens of mosaic still remaining in several of the Roman churches, the design of which is less crude, the attitudes less forced, and the composition more skilful, than were exhibited by the Greeks who ornamented the church of San Marco at Venice. Mino surpassed them in everything. From 1225 when he executed, however feebly, the mosaic of the tribune of the church of San Giovanni at Florence, he was considered at the head of living artists in mosaic. He merited this praise much more by his works at Rome; and it appears that he long maintained his reputation."

There is no doubt that the art of mosaic was in full practice in Italy at this period, and was not, as has been supposed, confined to the Greeks. There is a curious passage in the work of the Abbé Montfaucon * who made an extensive tour through Italy in 1695, to the effect that in the cathedral of Spoleto above the front entrance, he saw a piece of mosaic work made in the year 1207, with the following inscription:—

> "Hic est pictura quam fecit sat placitura,
> Doctor Solfernus hac summo in arte modernus.
> Annis inventis cum septem mille ducentis
> Operarij Palmenus," &c., &c.

Translation of the above inscription—

"This picture, which will please well, was made by Doctor Solfernus, the ablest of the moderns in this art, in the year 1207. The workmen were Palmenies," &c., &c.

I can find no other record of this Doctor Solfernus, but there can be little doubt that the art was at this time generally known throughout Italy.

We need not pause here to examine the question of whether Kugler is right in asserting that towards the close of the ninth century the art of mosaic had almost ceased in

* See *The Antiquities of Italy*, translated from the original Latin of Bernard de Montfaucon. London, 1725.

Italy; that it had done so at Rome appears certain; but at Venice, and also in southern Italy and Sicily, the art, if discontinued, was soon revived by the importation of Greek artists, and continued in full practice from the eleventh to the end of the fifteenth century, when it may be considered to have received its death-blow from the hand of oil painting.* It may, I think, be assumed that the arts of mosaic and painting were carried on at Rome during the tenth century, but were probably in a very declining state, and were quite superseded by the superior skill of the Greek artists.

There was a school of painting at Pisa as early, according to Lanzi, as the beginning of the twelfth century, and he gives an account of "a parchment containing the *exultet*, as usually sung upon Sabbato Santo (which) is in the cathedral, and we may here and there observe painted on it figures in miniature with plants and animals: it is a relique of the early part of the twelfth century, yet a specimen of art not altogether barbarous. There are likewise some other paintings of that century in the same cathedral, containing figures of our Lady, with the Holy Infant on her right arm: they are rude, but the progress of the same school may be traced from them to the time of Giunta." We may notice that Crowe and Cavalcaselle give the eleventh century as the date of the earliest picturos (crucifixes) at Pisa, but their only authority for this is the negative one of the Saviour's upright position, which, as we have mentioned above, was always observed up to the eleventh century. There is, however, no sufficient ground for believing that after this date the erect position was invariably departed from. Giunta of Pisa painted in the first half of the thirteenth century, and was the best of the Pisan school as far as is at present known. It is, however,

* For a full discussion of this question see Kugler's *Handbook of Painting, Italian Schools*, vol. i. pp. 43 *et seq.*

supposed by some who are most conversant with early Italian painting, that this school subsequently developed some great artists whose works are still to be seen, though their names have unfortunately perished; this would, however, be denied by Cavalcaselle.

I have spoken as shortly as I could of the sort of art in painting, mosaic, and sculpture which preceded Giotto; but before I close this very imperfect, and I fear confused and tedious, historical sketch, there is one other source of artistic influence which I must briefly mention, that is the influence of the Lombardic architecture of the twelfth century, which is seen to the greatest perfection in the cities of northern Italy, and which Mr. Ruskin once asserted to be the "root of all the mediæval art of Italy—without which no Giottos, no Angelicos, and no Raphaels would have been possible." The influence of this architecture upon Giotto, and his intense liking for it, is evident from the frequency with which he introduced it into the frescoes.

The Lombardic is the development in the West of the Romanesque architecture, whose leading feature was the round arch; it is the Byzantine style, without some of its Eastern characteristics, but with other peculiarities derived from Western sources.

Perhaps its most special feature, the one in which it has been without a rival in any bygone age, and is without a rival still, is in the decorative use of brick and terra-cotta. The very name has reference to this, for in the great plains of Lombardy where there is little stone, clay was naturally used as far as it possibly could be, to supply its place; and mouldings and statues which would have been carved from the solid stone or marble under more favourable circumstances, were here moulded out of brick. Hence arose a style which, as it could not depend upon the richness of its material, or the difficulty of its workmanship, could gain its only reward

from its delicacy of invention and grace of design, and in which the actual building of its sculptured tiles formed no inconsiderable part. This elevation of an ignoble material into value and dignity was, as Grüner says, actually effected in the Lombardic churches, and to them belongs that subtle charm which we involuntarily experience on discovering the perfect adaptation of simple things to great uses. Though nowhere carried to such perfection as by the Lombards of the twelfth century, this decorative use of brick was by no means a discovery of the more modern times, as we see from the following extract from Thomas Hope's *Historical Essay on Architecture*:—"The ancient Romans wherever they found clay more abundant or easier to work than stone, used it plentifully, both in regular layers throughout the body of the walls as we do, and in an external reticulated coating, which has proved to be as durable as stone itself, from the fineness of its texture and the firmness of its joints. Indeed far from considering brick as a material fit only for the coarsest and most indispensable groundwork of architecture, they regarded it as equally adapted for all the elegances of ornamental form —all the details of rich architraves, capitals, friezes, cornices, and other embellishments. Sometimes it owed to the mould its various forms, and at others, as in the *Amphitheatrum Castrense*, and the temple of the god Ridiculus, to the chisel." *

I almost despair of conveying an idea of the peculiarities of this architecture to those who have never seen any examples of it, its chief elements being those of simplicity and intricacy, solidity and lightness; it appearing, in fact, to be a mass of contradictions. Its Byzantine origin, or rather the influence on it at some time of Byzantine art, is clearly perceptible in the variety of colour which is employed; yellow,

* For an interesting account of building in terra-cotta, and the various operations of drying, baking the tiles, &c., see Grüner's *Terra-Cotta Architecture of Italy*. Introductory Essay. 1867.

and white, and red, and green, and black tiles and bricks being used alternately, with the utmost skill and the greatest variety of effect. But it is to the varieties of tower and cupola and dome that Lombardic architecture shows its most distinctive character; every combination of round arch vaulting with square, hexagonal, or circular towers, was used by them with a boldness, and a disregard of convention for which I know no parallel. And the result justified their daring.

Constructed first simply on the model of the old Roman basilica, then modified and extended by the influence of the art which Greek workmen brought from Constantinople, combining the fancy of the Arab, the roughness of the Goth, and the formalism of the Greek, this architecture grew from the seventh to the twelfth centuries, like a flower or tree, rejecting none of the influences with which it was surrounded. It may be possible, I have no doubt it is, for those who are skilled in the science of architecture, to discover the elements of a correct uniform style in these Lombardic buildings; but I confess that to me it seems but as the result of people who were prepared to make use of anything that came in their way, and had never formulated a method of building at all. The Roman arch, the Byzantine dome, the Arabian minaret, the square tower, the mosque, the basilica, and the temple, were all mingled here in a confusion of detail, which was yet executed with the utmost simplicity, we had almost said poverty, of material, and of which it is difficult to say whether the first impression produced, is wonder at the variety, indignation at the eccentricity, or delight at the effect of the whole building.*

I have now touched on the chief sources of artistic influence in Italy towards the middle of the thirteenth century, which, briefly summed up, are these—an art of painting which had become little more than a handicraft,

* See also chapter xxii. of Hope's *Historical Essay on Architecture.*

carried on in Rome after the recipes of long perished masters, and in other parts of Italy either dormant, or kept alive only by such men as Giunta of Pisa, and the pupils of the Greek artists; an art of mosaic work which also owed its chief, if not its only, importance, to Byzantine workmen, and which was even then engaged in decorating the shrine of St. Mark at Venice, with Grecian designs. In sculpture, the Pisani, father and son, and their pupils and fellow workers, trying to revive classicalism as a barrier against the false state of religious art, but failing to see that, after all, the strength of the ancients lay not in their ideal, but in their real perfection of nature—and so losing itself in the wilds of imitative and traditional art; and lastly, there were flourishing in Italy, two great schools of architecture closely allied, the Byzantine and the Lombard, and gradually spreading was a third school destined to destroy them both, which we have nicknamed Gothic. Try to realise the artistic state of the country amongst this medley of dead and dying styles, with the whole influence of the classic past in favour of the traditional mode of painting and sculpture, and the whole strength of the priesthood arrayed against any attempt to make fresh inroads upon the sacred realm of Church symbolism and scriptural formalism; the Church still holding fast to the ascetic theory as the one saving grace, perhaps even the more strongly, because the ascetic practice had become a thing of the past.

CHAPTER III.

FRESCO PAINTING.

"Ascend the right stair from the further nave
To muse in a small chapel scarcely lit
By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and brave
That picture was accounted, mark, of old;
A king stood bare before its sovran grace,
A reverent people shouted to behold
The picture, not the king, and even the place
Containing such a miracle grew bold."
—MRS. BARRETT BROWNING.

AS we shall have occasion, in the following pages, to speak of fresco, secco, and tempera, as distinguished from oil painting, it will be wise to try and understand clearly what these methods of work are, and in what respects they differ from, exceed, or fall short of, the modern practice.

Tempera * is the old name for any vehicle used in painting. The two great divisions of painting in the Middle Ages were fresco and secco; shortly put "fresco," meaning the painting on walls when the plaster was wet; "secco," the painting when it was dry. In fresco painting no vehicle was used but water; in secco painting a tempera was used composed of white and yolk of egg. Thus, in Cennino Cennini's *Treatise on Painting*, written in 1437,† he says:—"Two sorts are good, but one is

* Though frequently wrongly used as synonymous with secco.

† Recent researches by Signors Gaetano and Carlo Milanesi (Florence, 1859) prove this date, which is given by Tambrani and in Mrs. Merrifield's translation, to be only that of the copy of the original MS. Cennini's work was originally written in all probability at least ten years earlier.

better than the other. The first tempera consists in the white and yolk of an egg into which are put some cuttings from the top of a fig-tree; beat them well together, then add some of this tempera, and not in too great quantity, to each of the vases (of colour), as if you were diluting them with water. The second kind of tempera is the yolk of the egg only, and you must know that this tempera is of universal application on walls, on pictures, and in fresco, and you cannot use too much of it, but it would be wise to take a middle course."

It is to be noted that in his instructions for colouring in fresco, Cennini is very particular to state several times that no vehicle is to be used except water. All frescoes at this time were re-touched in secco, with temperas such as above described; the fresco seems to have been somewhat similar to the first painting in oil, and to have received all its more minute details from the subsequent work in secco. This was almost inevitably the case, as from the haste with which large spaces of the wall had to be covered, there could hardly be time to put in much detail, besides, many of the colours employed could not be used in fresco,* though all were used to finish works originally painted in fresco. Secco had an especial province of its own; all *pictures*, as distinguished from wall paintings, being executed in it. It must be remembered that in the time of Giotto the use of canvas was not yet introduced, and all small designs were painted upon linen cloths, stretched tightly over the surface of a smooth panel, and covered with coats of plaster carefully trimmed;† the next step in the preparation of the ground was to substitute parchment stretched over wood for the prepared linen.

* In fresco some colours cannot be used, as artiemen, cinnabar, azuno della magna, mina, biucca, verdesume, and lacca.—*Cennini.*

† According to Mrs. Jameson, *Lives of the Painters*, p. 8, all movable pictures were, up to 1440, painted on panels of prepared wood; an evident mistake, made from a superficial examination of the back of the pictures.

It must be noticed that from the time of Cennini to that of Raphael, the practice of completing the fresco in secco grew gradually to be considered as a mark of an inferior artist, though it was never wholly discontinued (according to Mrs. Merrifield's treatise), except by a few "very expert artists, formed chiefly in the school of the Carracci." It is perhaps not always borne in mind by those unacquainted with painting, that the range of colouring in fresco is strictly limited; no colours being employed in it by the early Italians except such as were natural, and nearly all the more brilliant colours are artificial, such, for instance, as lake, vermilion, azure. The blues were more fugitive than any other hues, and in many cases have wholly disappeared, turned green or black, or flaked off from the surface of the walls.

Thus it will be clearly understood that the difference between painting in fresco and painting in secco, or (as it is more commonly called) in distemper, lies in two things, the kind of vehicle employed—water in the first, and glue of some sort (chiefly of egg) in the second method; and in the nature of the colours used, the first being restricted to tints comparatively simple and elementary, the second able to make use of the most elaborate colours obtainable. The first method is eminently suited to the expression of great thoughts in simple language, the second is more adapted to give pleasure, from the exquisiteness of the colours employed, and the skill with which the details are elaborated. The latter is the painting of the studio; the former the painting of the church, the palace, or the market-place. I do not think this difference is sufficiently understood in the present day; it does not appear as if painters had grasped the fact that the greatest strength of fresco lay in its emancipation from all the necessities of minute detail and careful elaboration; a freedom gained by the nature of the material. It is not that in itself this freedom is a good thing, but that it affords the artist

a means of expression which he can hardly gain through the medium of painting in oil. In much the same way as a modern dining-room, however perfect in its decoration and gorgeous in its upholstery, can never give us the same effect as the rough pillars of some ruined temple; so does the comparative rough sublimity of fresco afford to a true artist a means of expressing great thoughts and lofty ideas in a comparatively facile manner. For it must be remembered he has not only spaces to decorate of a size commensurate with his subject, be it ever so important, but he has hardly to do more than to express his great thought clearly, and all small details are lost in the splendour of his conception. This is the real power of size in painting; a large picture, if it be not finished with the care of a small one, needs to be a representation of some thought which gains in grandeur from the size of its canvas; there can be no justification for covering ten feet square with the representation of an incident of no particular importance, or a scene of no particular beauty; for with every added foot of space which the artist takes up, he really makes an added claim to importance, and a subject which might have been of sufficient interest to have justified a painting on a minute scale, does but betray its insignificance when delineated on a large one. The whole of art being but the nicest possible adaptation of means to ends, it rightly shocks and repels us when we find an artist wilfully violating these conditions, and, in order to appear of greater importance in our eyes, making what might be a tolerable molehill, into a very indifferent mountain. This was very clearly seen by the old Italian masters, who almost invariably chose fresco as the medium for their most important works, assigning to oil painting a lower province.

In connection with this subject the following quotation of Michelangelo's opinion may be interesting:—"Quand il fut question de peindre dans la Chapelle Sextine, le frère Sebastiano,

peintre Vénitienne, conseiller de le Pape, de forcer Michel Ange à le faire à l'huile, et la mur fut préparé à cet effet. Le grand homme arrive, et fait degrader cet apprêt, disait fièrement que la peinture à l'huile n'était bonne que pour les dames, les personnes lentes, et qui se pique l'adresse, tels que la frère Sebastiano; et l'ouvrage fut fait à fresque, parceque à genre de peinture méprise cette attention à manœuvre; vain merite qui est perdu pour elle. La touche disparait dans l'enduit qui la dévore, elle n'occupe pas l'âme du grand artiste, qui alors tout entière aux caractères, aux formes, aux expressions, et à la saillie des corps. Son goût ne se manifeste pas sans science, sa main ne s'occupe que d'expérience, et il se livre tout entier à cette tâche difficile—la seule digne de lui. S'il la remplie, la spectateur est transporté, et comme l'auteur, il va cherche rien au-delà." *

We cannot stay to define the limits, within which it seems to us that this is a correct expression of the merits of fresco, but that it is in the main true is indisputable, and it is impossible to tell the good effect which might be produced upon the art of the present day, by encouraging our young painters to work in fresco, simply requiring of them that they should have something to say, and say it clearly. No theories as to the production of a great school of painting, will, I think, be able to map out a better means of attaining good art, than this simple one of making clear expression of a great subject the first object. Curiously enough, the only English artist who seems thoroughly to have understood the great scope of fresco painting was Fuseli, and in his lectures at the Royal Academy may be found a clear and enthusiastic exposition of this method.

* *Encyclopédie Méthodique.* Paris, 1788.

CHAPTER IV.

CIMABUE.

"I say 'Consider it' in vain; you cannot consider it, for you cannot conceive the sickness of heart with which a young painter of deep feeling toils through his first obscurity; his sense of the strong voice within him, which you will not hear; his vain, fond wondering witness to the things you will not see; his far away perception of things that he could accomplish if he had but peace and time, all unapproachable, and all vanishing from him, because no one will leave him peace, or grant him time."—JOHN RUSKIN, *Political Economy of Art.*

LOOK back six hundred and forty years, and linger in fancy by the side of the Arno, where Florence in the height of her power and beauty, stood then as now, and you may hear the joy-bells ringing across the swift river for the birth of one of her proudest sons. Thirty years more, and the whole city will rise in procession to honour him, and bear his work in triumph to the quiet church of St. Mary; and six hundred years later, the representation of that honour will hang on the walls of an English gallery; and people will talk, question, and whisper about *The Cimabue Procession.* They may well admire it and ask its meaning; for to the painter it commemorated we owe the art of England as surely, as that to Leighton we owe the picture which represents the old master's triumph.

In two ways are we indebted to Cimabue for the emancipation of painting; first, for the work which he did himself

accomplish; and second and in chief, for his discovery and education of the shepherd boy, whose fame was ultimately to eclipse his own.* I say that the master's fame was to be eclipsed by his pupil, but that must be taken with one most important reservation. However much we may be convinced of Giotto's superiority, we are always forced to bear in mind the fact, that had it not been for Cimabue, that superiority would in all probability never have been known. Differing in the particulars of the story, all the accounts of Giotto's early life agree in this important fact, that it was Cimabue who discovered his early talent, who persuaded his father to let him enter his profession, and who educated him as a painter at his own expense, from the time that he was ten years old. Is not this a greater monument to Cimabue's name, than any amount of Madonnas carried in triumph through the "street of gladness?" Rightly understood, is it not even a surer testimony to the fact of his being a true artist; for does it not prove that the painter had more devotion to his art than his fame? To see in a youth, poor and unknown, the signs of genius, greater perhaps than your own, to take him from his obscurity, and to instruct his ignorance, careless of the effect which may be thereby produced upon your own reputation, and finally to stand aside while he wins the honour which is his due, but which nevertheless would have fallen to your share, had it not been for your own action; this seems to me as great a sacrifice of petty pride, and as great a triumph over natural selfishness, as can well be conceived. And this is what Cimabue did, urged by no duty, and without possible reward, save that of doing his best for

* I have, throughout this essay, followed the mass of authority which describes Giotto's father as a poor tenant farmer, or lower still in the social scale; but the most recent researches go to prove that he was in well-to-do circumstances, was, in fact, of the rank of "Cavaliere," and it is certain that Giotto inherited some property from him.

his art and his pupil. We owe him then a double debt: for his own work in loosening the bonds of tradition, and for the instruction of the artist whose paintings and sculptures were to inaugurate the real methods of art, and extend its province, from the mere exponent of religious legend to the representation of the passions of humanity and the beauty of nature.

What little is known of the life of Cimabue we can give in a very few words. Even Vasari, garrulous as he is, has little more to tell us, than that he lived, painted certain pictures, received certain honours, had a pupil called Giotto, whose fame eclipsed his own, and died.

"In the year 1240 Giovanni Cimabue, of the noble family of that name was born at Florence, to give the first light to the art of painting." Then follows the account of his Greek instruction in the art of painting, which is doubted for various reasons by most modern authorities, chiefly, it appears because Vasari has made him paint in the chapel of the Gondi, which was not built at that time. Crowe and Cavalcaselle however do not give any other explanation of Cimabue's teaching; and Lindsay says he painted in the subterranean church under the instruction of the Greeks; while Lanzi, in the *History of Painting*, suggests that the paintings of the Greeks who are supposed to have instructed Cimabue, may be seen in the chapels of the old church beneath the sacristy of S. Maria Novella.

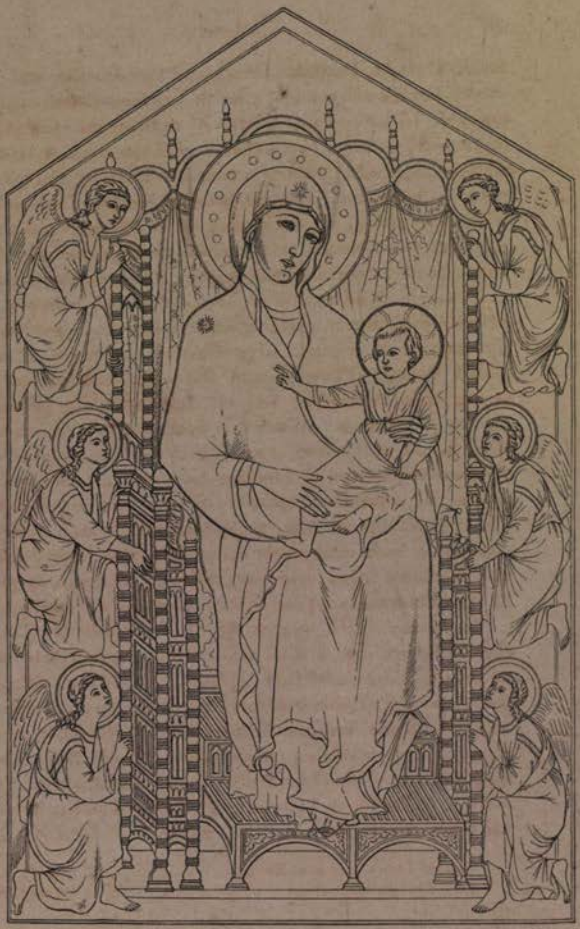
The point, however, is of little importance. After painting various works at Florence and Pisa, all of which have now perished, he was invited to help in the decoration of the church at Assisi. According to Vasari, he there painted in both the upper and lower churches, but, with some few exceptions, little of these frescoes remain; and the whole question as to the authorship of the five remaining frescoes in these churches has long been a favourite battle-ground for critics. Vasari,

Lanzi, Rumohr, Eastlake, Crowe and Cavalcaselle, and many others having all theories more or less inconsistent with one another. I shall content myself with noticing the chief theories on the subject when I speak later on of the work of Giotto at Assisi. After this, Cimabue returned to Florence, and executed his great panel, the *Virgin Enthroned*, a picture of colossal size, which was placed in the church of S. Maria Novella; this was the work which was carried through the city by a triumphant procession of the people. "It is further reported," and may be read in certain records of old painters, that whilst Cimabue was painting this picture in a garden near the gate of S. Pietro, King Charles the Elder of Anjou passed through Florence, and the authorities of the city, among other marks of respect, conducted him to see the picture of Cimabue. When this work was thus shown to the King it had not before been seen by any one; wherefore all the men and women of Florence hastened in great crowds to admire it, making all possible demonstrations of delight. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood, rejoicing in this occurrence, ever afterwards called that place Borgo Allegri, and this name it has ever since retained, although in process of time it became enclosed within the walls of the city." *

Vasari has little to tell us of the incidents of Cimabue's life, nor can I find any other records likely to be authentic, which have fuller details. In a short time after the execution of this Madonna, the artist was appointed to superintend the building of Santa Maria del Fiore, in conjunction with a celebrated architect, Arnolfo Lapo, and he died, whilst the building was still unfinished, at the age of sixty.† If he adopted Giotto in 1286, *i.e.* when the latter was ten years of age (the time given by most of the authorities),

* Vasari, *Lives of the most Eminent Painters, &c.*, vol. i. p. 42.

† Lord Lindsay gives the date of his death as 1302, on the authority of Ciampi.



THE MADONNA ENTHRONED. BY CIMABUE.

In the Rucellai Chapel, S. Maria Novella, Florence.

his pupil must, according to the time given by Cennini, have just finished his novitiate when his master died; as, in his treatise on painting, that author gives thirteen years as the time in which the art of painting can be acquired. As it may well be that amongst my readers there be some who are desirous of knowing the shortest time in which it is possible to learn to paint, I will quote the words of the treatise. They may perchance aid amateurs to think a little more justly of what the mechanical difficulties of painting were, even in the rude days of early pre-Raphaelitism:—

"Know that you cannot learn to paint in less time than that which I shall name to you. In the first place you must study drawing for at least one year, then you must remain with a master at the workshop for the space of six years, at least, that you may learn all the parts and members of the art; to grind colours, to boil down glues, to grind plaster (gesso), to acquire the practice of laying grounds on pictures, to work in relief, and to scrape (or smooth) the surface, and to gild; afterwards to practise colouring, to adorn with mordants, paint cloths of gold, and paint on walls for six more years, drawing without intermission on holy days and work days. And by this means you will acquire great experience. If you do otherwise you will never attain perfection. There are many who say you may learn the art without the assistance of a master. Do not believe them; let this book be an example to you, studying it day and night. And if you do not study under some master, you will never be fit for anything; nor will you be able to show your face among the masters."

There is another curious statement about Cimabue, and one which is very significant of his intense care for the best interests of art; it occurs in an MS. commentary upon Dante, called the *Anonimo*, and was written while Giotto was still living, that is before 1330.* The author says:—"Cimabue

* See notes to Mrs. Foster's translation of Vasari.

of Florence, a painter of the time of our author (*i.e.* Dante) knew more of the noble art (that of painting) than any other man, but he was so arrogant and proud withal, that if any one discovered a fault in his work, or if he perceived one himself (as will often happen to the artist who fails from the defects in the material that he uses, or from insufficiency of the instrument with which he works), he would instantly destroy that work, however costly it might be." There could be no surer testimony to the light in which Cimabue regarded his painting than this of the old Florentine commentator's, and it is amusing to see how, six hundred years ago, artists were liable to exactly the same amount of mistaken blame and misapprehension as they are to-day. [It is not six months ago since I heard one of the greatest of our living painters severely censured, because he would not part with a portrait which did not come up to his standard of good work, and though the opinion was expressed in the choicest slang of the nineteenth century, it was almost an exact equivalent for the words of the author *Anonimo;* for I suppose "he did it for swagger," really means much the same as "proud and arrogant."]

The changes introduced by Cimabue into the conventional representations of religious subjects were numerous, and though each slight in itself, formed, when taken as a whole, a very marked progression from the Byzantine manner, but whether owing to respect for his early masters, or from the almost overpowering effect of Church tradition, the artist never wholly succeeded in shaking off the established forms of painting in the general arrangement of his figures and backgrounds.

If we compare his great picture in S. Maria Novella with one of a similar subject by Guido of Siena, his predecessor,*

* There are excellent engravings of both these pictures in Kugler's *Handbook of Painting*, pages 105 and 109 of the fifth edition.

in the Church of S. Domenico at Siena, we shall find that the main lines of the composition are much the same. Nevertheless the advance is very clearly marked. The folds of the drapery have lost much of the stiffness and angularity, and the attitude and expression of the Virgin, though still wanting life and energy, are simple and comparatively natural. A still greater improvement may be noticed in the gestures of the angels which support the throne, and in the action of the child Saviour on the Virgin's lap. In this picture there is, I think, a direct contradiction to the assertion of Crowe* that "in the flow of his drapery Cimabue made no sensible progress;" † though in other respects that author does full justice to the improvements introduced by the artist. Many other modifications of style are noticeable in Cimabue's works, especially the manner in which he abandoned what we may call the mosaic-like manner of painting, which had been in use for so long a time, and blended one colour with another instead of leaving it as a bright patch, divided by a sharp line. Much of his colour has either faded or disappeared entirely, but enough is left to show that it must have been originally very rich in hue, and though of a deep tone, free from the heaviness and obscurity which was so prevalent in the work of the Byzantine artists. In the *Enthroned Madonna* of the Lower Church at Assisi, which is indisputably one of his works, the colouring is far richer and deeper than anything remaining of Giotto's, though it does not possess the exquisite clearness and delicacy of the latter; and is comparatively monotonous. This picture has however suffered so severely

* *History of Painting in Italy*, vol. i. p. 205.

† Look, for instance, at the natural manner in which the border of the Virgin's drapery falls into its folds. The woodcut of this picture here given does little more than show the arrangement of the picture; but even here the advance is perceptible.

from damp, that it cannot be judged fair to say what the colour has, or has not, been, though it is still beautiful, and fortunately unrestored.*

In the Accademia of Florence there is another colossal Madonna by Cimabue, also an altar-piece representing the same subject as that of the one in S. Maria Novella, the arrangement, however, being slightly different. Instead of the six guardian angels who support the chair on which the Virgin is seated (in the former picture), there are here eight, and beneath the throne in niches stand four prophets; the thirty medallions of saints which surround the frame in the former picture are here absent. I am unable to give an accurate description of the differences between these two pictures, as I have only studied the one in the Accademia;† but there is, according to Crowe and Cavalcaselle, "a more obstinate maintenance of the old types" in the latter picture: and it is certainly true, from my own observation, that the colour has sustained such injuries from restoration and time, as to be almost entirely destroyed. This picture was originally of the gable form, but some ingenious artist, who considered that an unpleasant shape for a picture, has supplied the two triangular pieces necessary to complete the oblong, and painted thereon two cherubim, as poor in conception, colour, and execution as could well be imagined. The old shape of the work is still clearly visible, and in any other country than Italy would be at once restored.‡

* Vol. i. p. 206. Vasari attributes the loss of colour in Buffulmacco's pictures to the use of a peculiar purple mixed with salt, which corroded the other colours; possibly this may be the case with Cimabue's.

† Since writing the above sentence I have been to the Rucellai Chapel for the purpose of studying the great Cimabue referred to above, the description of which is accordingly given in a later chapter.

‡ It is noticeable that in Lindsay's *Christian Art*, it is to the influence of the sculptor, Niccola Pisano, rather than that of Cimabue, that Giotto owed his study of nature, &c., vol. ii. p. 82.

CHAPTER V.

GIOTTO.

"Where Cimabue found the shepherd boy,
Tracing his idle fancies on the ground."
ROGERS'S *Italy*.

GIOTTO was born * at the small village of Vespignano, about fourteen miles from Florence, amidst surroundings, the chief characteristics of which are very beautifully described by Mr. Ruskin in the following paragraph:—

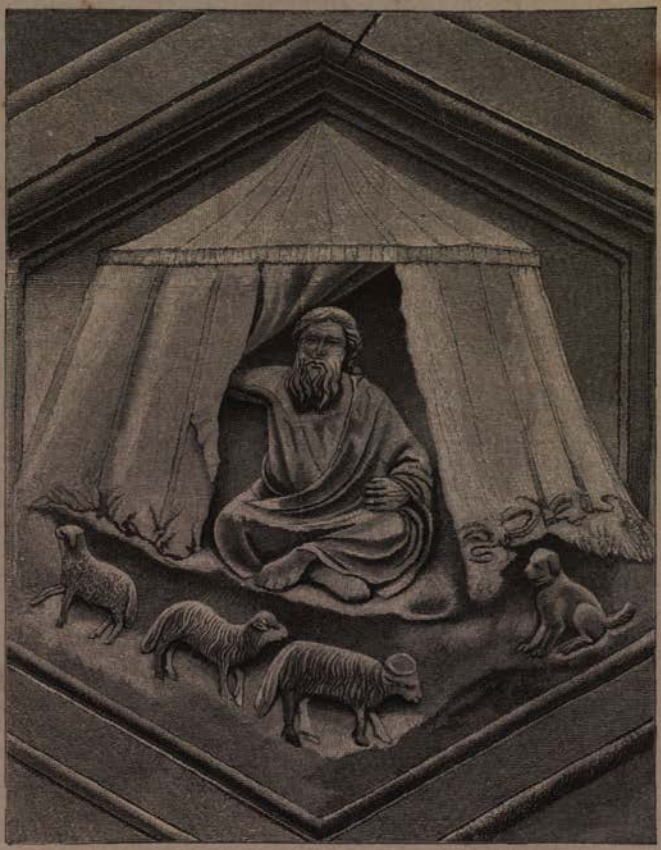
"Few travellers can forget the peculiar landscape of that district of the Apennines. As they ascend the hill which rises from Florence to the lowest peak in the ridge of Fiesole, they pass continually beneath the walls of villas bright in perfect luxury, and beside cypress hedges inclosing fair terraced gardens, where the masses of oleander and magnolia, motionless as leaves in a picture, inlay alternately upon the blue sky their branching lightness of pale rose colour and deep green breadth of shade, studded with walls of gleaming silver; and shining at intervals through their framework of rich leaf and rubied flower, the far-away bends of the Arno beneath its slopes of olive, and the purple peaks of the Carrara mountains tossing themselves against the western distance, where the

* "The date is disputed. Crowe now gives 1266, but I have, throughout, followed Vasari and other writers who give 1276. All the chronology of Giotto, except the date of his death, is highly uncertain."—H. Q.

streaks of motionless clouds hover above the Pisan sea. The traveller passes the Fiesolan ridge, and all is changed. The country is on a sudden lonely. Here and there indeed are seen the scattered houses of a farm grouped gracefully upon the hill-sides; here and there a fragment of tower upon a distant rock; but neither gardens nor flowers, nor glittering palace exists. Only a gray extent of mountain-ground tufted irregularly with ilex and olive; a scene not sublime, for its forms are subdued and low; not desolate, for its valleys are full of sown fields and tended pastures; not rich nor lovely, but sunburnt and sorrowful, becoming wilder every instant as the road winds into its recesses, ascending still, until the higher woods, now partly oak and partly pine, dropping back from the central crest of the Apennines, leave a partial wilderness of scathed rock and arid grass, withered away here by frost, and there by strange lambent tongues of earth-fed fire."*

Giotto's name is, according to Lord Lindsay, a contraction of Ambrogiotto. In the modern sense of the word, he appears to have had absolutely no education, for we find him when ten years old engaged in tending sheep upon the hill-side. It is noticeable that for one who was to effect the change in art which Giotto subsequently produced, no amount of early training could have been so beneficial, as the silent undogmatic one, that he received amongst the fresh meadows, and under the blue skies. The native genius within him grew gradually in strength, unhelped save by the influences of rustic life, and unhindered by tradition or example. It was no doubt to these early shepherd days, that he owed the strong sympathy with nature that he retained during his whole career, and his power of representing simple facts of animal life. Throughout all his pictures,

* "At Pietro Mala. The flames rise two or three feet above the stony ground out of which they spring, white and fierce enough to be visible in the intense rays even of the morning sun."—J. R.



PASTORAL LIFE. BAS-RELIEF DESIGNED BY GIOTTO.

On the Campanile, Florence.

even those of his latest period, whenever he got a chance of introducing an animal he always seized it eagerly, and the little touches of dog, donkey, and ox nature which may be found scattered here and there in his works, form one of its most peculiar and pleasing features; especially when we consider that this was to artists an absolutely virgin soil. Thus in the fresco at Assisi * representing the birth of Christ, perhaps the most remarkable portion of the picture is the manner in which the two donkeys are poking their heads over the manger to examine the child, with that expression of happy placid stupidity, so well known to all who have ever had to do with these animals. And again, in the sculpture of the shepherd, forming one of the series round the base of the Campanile at Florence, the expression of the puppy's face, (grave consideration mixed with a sense of responsibility) as he watches the sheep filing past the shepherd's tent, is wonderfully natural, and worthy of Sir Edwin Landseer, except that it is in one way much too good for him, in its thorough dogginess; Landseer always intensified his animals' feelings to the very verge of caricature. Hence one reason why he was so commonly and universally popular.

At any rate, such was Giotto's early life, spent in simple rural duties, and untroubled by school-boards and science primers; but when he was about ten years old, a strange event occurred which changed the whole current of his history. For there came riding through the valley the famous painter of Florence, Cimabue, then at the height of his reputation, and passed close to where the boy shepherd was sitting neglectful of his duties, trying to draw one of his flock with a piece of sharp slate upon the surface of rock.

* This fresco is, I think, the work of one of Giotto's pupils, but probably executed from the master's design, or under his superintendence, or in any case is an imitation of Giotto's method of introducing animal life into his compositions.

We may suppose that there was something in the work which the painter knew to be genius, for according to all the legends, he does not appear to have hesitated in the least, but after asking the boy if he would like to go with him, and receiving a glad answer in the affirmative, he obtained the father's permission, took him to Florence, and installed him in his own studio.

It must be remembered that an artist's studio was a very different place in 1286, from what we call by the same name at the present time. It resembled a workshop, in which the pupils prepared and ground the colours under the master's direction, deriving what instruction they might from seeing him work and hearing him talk; nor were they allowed to touch brush or pencil till they had rendered themselves thorough masters of the preparation of the various colours, temperas, &c. A mastery which, as we have seen, was supposed at that time to take about six years to acquire.

So the boy lived with his master in Florence, and worked, much as a house painter's apprentice works now; drawing, no doubt, at every odd minute in the meantime, in fear and trembling, and thinking art was a very much longer business than he had bargained for, when he left his home to become a painter.

Many days no doubt he looked out from the rough building where he and his fellow pupils were grinding the master's colours, and saw Cimabue standing in the shady garden, before a great glory of crimson drapery and golden background, and many a time his heart sank within him as he looked, and he thought it impossible that he could ever acquire that marvellous skill. But on these early days all the biographies are alike silent, there is not even an apocryphal anecdote of Vasari's to enliven the darkness; and whatever we may fancy, we know absolutely nothing.

The next point of Giotto's life where history takes up the record is at the incident of the O. Briefly told, this is as follows. About 1296,* according to Lord Lindsay, Boniface VIII.† was desirous of adding to the decorations of St. Peter's, "and sent one of his courtiers from Treviso to Tuscany to ascertain what kind of man Giotto might be, and what were his works." On his way the messenger received designs from various artists in Siena, and then came to Giotto, told him of his mission, and no doubt showed him the elaborate designs which he had received from the Sienese artists. Whereupon Giotto drew with one sweep of his arm a circle in red ink, of perfect accuracy, and gave it to the messenger, refusing to send any other design, "whereby," says Vasari, "the Pope and such of his courtiers as were well versed in the subject, perceived how far Giotto surpassed all the other painters of his time."

Whatever truth there may be in the details of this incident, it is, as Ruskin points out,‡ significant in showing the manner in which the Pope and his counsellors judged of art: *i.e.*, that the best workman was the best man, which for a rough and ready test is not altogether a bad one.

The date of Giotto's visit to Rome is still further fixed by an assertion of Baldinucci's that there is a record in the Vatican in a register, to the effect that the mosaic of the *Navicella* (which is still in the portico of St. Peter's though enormously

* After working at Assisi and Pisa, according to Vasari, who is followed by Kugler. It is quite clear that Kugler is wrong in supposing that when Giotto visited Rome in 1298, he had previously executed the frescoes on the ceiling of the Lower Church at Assisi, for those works are evidently later than those of the Upper Church, and even in point of time it is impossible that both series could have been painted prior to 1298, when the painter was but twenty-two.

† Vasari says Benedict XI., but Rumohr shows it was Boniface who invited Giotto to Rome. Schorn, in note to Vasari.

‡ *Giotto and his Works in Padua.* Published for the Arundel Society.

damaged), was executed at Rome in 1298. If this be true, and though quoted by Crowe it is not contradicted, it fixes the date of Giotto's visit as at all events not later than that year. Of the works of Giotto at Rome I shall speak in a subsequent chapter, in which I shall endeavour to fix upon the analogy of style, the order in which Giotto painted at Florence, Padua, and Assisi. It should have been noticed that Crowe and Cavalcaselle make the incident of the O occur in the time of Benedict XI; by supposing that that Pope sent from Avignon "at the request of Petrarch, to seek out the best artists of Italy for the purpose of restoring and adorning the churches and palaces of Rome which were falling into decay." This, however, leaves Giotto's first visit to Rome in 1298 unaccounted for, and contradicts Vasari and Lindsay, apparently without sufficient cause, for it seems highly improbable that if the painter had been already engaged in painting and designing mosaics for St. Peter's, that in after years the Pope should have thought it necessary to have a proof of his skill.

However, the date of this visit to Rome is of little importance, as the whole of the works of Giotto in that city have been long destroyed, with the exception of the mosaic of the *Navicella*, and some small hand pictures in the Sacristy of St. Peter's.*

About the year 1300 it seems probable that Giotto returned to Florence, and in the following year painted in the Chapel of the Podesta—commonly called the Bargello. It was here that Giotto introduced (I believe for the first time in the history of mediæval Italian art) accurate portraits of living people into his picture of *Paradise*. It is here that the famous portrait of Dante in his early manhood was discovered after having been covered with whitewash for two hundred years.

* Portions of what is called the Stefaneschi altar piece; I am informed very fine in quality, but cannot speak from experience.

It was with the greatest difficulty that an American named Kirkup, and Signor Bezzi obtained permission from the Italian government to remove the whitewash from this fresco of *Paradise* at their own expense.* All the frescoes in this chapel are very greatly injured by time and neglect, whitewash and restoration, and especially the Dante portrait, which has suffered most of all from the last-mentioned cause. As I shall have little occasion to refer to the works in this chapel in subsequent chapters, I may here say that in my opinion Crowe and Cavalcaselle have erred in attributing all of them to Giotto.† There are many which show little, if any, trace of the master's hand, and others which are apparently imitations by pupils; as, however, the frescoes are all exceedingly defaced, it is not worth while to dwell minutely on this point.‡

In less than two years from the date of this picture of the *Paradise*, Dante was exiled to Verona, and for three or four years Giotto did not see him again. In the year 1306, when Giotto went to Padua to paint the Arena Chapel, Dante also settled in that town.§

Within a year from the painting of the Bargello, Giotto married a lady, of whom, no matter what may have been her virtues or attractions, posterity knows little or nothing, save that she bore the painter several children, and that her name was Ciuta di Lapo. It was shortly after this period of his life that he produced what must on the whole be considered the greatest work of his life—the decoration of the Scrovegni Chapel at Padua. This was a small barn-like edifice of perfectly plain exterior, which had just been

* It was subsequently defrayed by the Tuscan government.

† Crowe considers them to be undoubtedly his.

‡ That the large fresco of *Paradise*, in which the portraits of Dante and Corso Donati occur is by Giotto, is, I think, quite certain.

§ The house where Dante lived is still shown to strangers.

built by Enrico Scrovegni, on the site of an old Roman amphitheatre, and dedicated to the Madonna.

According to some accounts, Giotto himself was its architect; but this has only been surmised from the fact of his decoration being so admirably suited to the building. The fact probably being that had the building been of a different or more elaborate shape, he would have treated it in a different manner. As it was, the extreme simplicity of the arrangement of the frescoes, is most happily in harmony with the simplicity of the architecture. Here he seems to have lived for several years, and here as we have said came Dante in 1306, having passed the intervening years of his exile at Bologna. According to Baldinucci, our painter had no less than six children, all of whom were of a surpassing ugliness; and it is recorded that Dante remarked upon this circumstance to him, pretending to be surprised that one who could paint such beautiful figures should have such ugly sons; to which Giotto replied by a jest more suited to his own times, than to ours. Indeed, all that the biography of Giotto amounts to after this, is an account of his various jokes and eccentricities, most of which, I must confess, seem to me of very poor quality, somewhat akin to the pleasantries told at the tea-table of a humorous schoolmaster, or to those which are murmured between the pauses of the work, at the weekly meetings of a Dorcas society. However, all the historians agree in asserting that he was a man of infinite jest, and the humour of these anecdotes may well have evaporated in the course of six hundred years. The following, which I give as it occurs in Vasari, derives a certain interest from the quaint simplicity with which the biographer tells it, and the naïve way in which justice is depicted as of course being on the side of the best speaker, is not without a certain amount of significance, even in our enlightened nineteenth century.

"Giotto, as we have said before, was of an exceedingly jocund humour, and abounded in witty and humorous remarks, which are still well remembered in Florence. Examples of these may be found not only in the writings of Messer Giovanni Boccaccio, but also in the three hundred stories of Franco Sacchetti, who cites many amusing instances of his talent in this way. And here I will not refuse the labour of transcribing some of these stories, giving them in Franco's own words, that my readers may be made acquainted with the peculiar phraseology and modes of speech used in those times, together with the story itself. He says there in one of these, to set it forth with its proper title:—

"'*To Giotto, the great painter, is given a buckler to paint by a man of small account. He, making a jest of the matter, paints in such sort that the owner is put out of countenance.*'

"Every one has long since heard of Giotto, and knows how greatly he stood above all other painters. Hearing the fame of the master, a rude artisan, who desired to have a buckler painted, perhaps because he was going to do watch and ward in some castle, marched at once to the workshop of Giotto, with one bearing the shield behind him. Having got there he speedily found Giotto, to whom he said, 'God save thee, master! I would fain have thee paint me my arms on this shield.'

"Giotto, having observed the man and considered his manner, replied nothing more than—'When wilt thou have it finished?' which the other having told him, he answered, 'Leave the matter to me;' and the fellow departed. Then Giotto, being left alone, began to think within himself, 'What may this mean? Hath some one sent this man to make a jest of me? However it be, no man before ever brought me a buckler to paint; yet here is this simple fellow who brings me his shield, and bids me paint his arms upon it as though he were of the royal family of France. Of a

verity, I must make him arms of a new fashion.' Thinking thus within himself, he takes the said buckler, and having designed what he thought proper, called one of his scholars and bade him complete the painting. This was a tin scull-cap, a gorget, a pair of iron gauntlets, with a cuirass, cuishes, and gandadoes, a sword, a dagger, and a spear. Our great personage, of whom nobody knew anything, having returned for his shield, marches forward and inquires, 'Master, is the shield painted?' 'To be sure it is,' replied Giotto; 'bring it down here.' The shield being brought, our wise gentleman that would be, began to open his eyes and look at it, calling out to Giotto, 'What trumpery is this that thou hast painted me here?' 'Will it seem to thee a trumpery matter to pay for it?' answered Giotto. 'I will not pay five farthings for it all,' returned the clown. 'And what didst thou require me to paint?' asked Giotto. 'My arms.' 'And are they not here,' rejoined the painter; 'is there one wanting?' 'Good, good,' quoth the man. 'Nay, verily, but it is rather bad, bad,' responded Giotto. 'Lord, help thee, for thou must needs be a special simpleton; why, if a man were to ask thee, "Who art thou?" it would be a hard matter for thee to tell him; yet here thou comest and criest, "Paint me my arms!" If thou wert of the house of the Bardi, that were enough; but thou! what arms dost thou bear? Who art thou? Who were thy forefathers? Art thou not ashamed of thyself? Begin at least to come into the world before thou talkest of arms, as though thou wert Dusnam of Bavaria at the very least. I have made thee a whole suit of armour on thy shield, if there be any other piece, tell me, and I'll put that too.' 'Thou hast given me rough words, and hast spoiled my shield,' declared the other; and going forth, betook himself to the justice, before whom he caused Giotto to be called. The latter forthwith appeared, but on his side summoned the complainant for two florins,

the price of the painting, and which he demands to be be paid.

"The pleadings being heard on both sides, and Giotto's story being much better told than that of our clown, the judge decided that the latter should take away his buckler, and should pay six livres to Giotto, whom they declared to have the right. Thus the good man had to pay and take to his shield; whereupon he was bidden to depart, and not knowing his place had it taught to him on this wise.".

In 1307, Giotto appears to have finished his work at the Scrovegni Chapel, and removed to Florence, where he ultimately settled down. Of this period of his life little, if anything, is known. He went to Assisi some time after this, when I have found it impossible to discover.* He painted during these latter years at Florence, in four chapels of the Santa Croce, at Ravenna (and at Ferrara and Verona, according to Vasari); probably also he made excursions from Florence into many of the neighbouring towns, but no certain traces of his work exist. In 1328 he was commissioned to paint the portrait of Charles of Calabria, the son of Robert of Naples, and in 1330 was sent for by the latter to adorn some of the Neapolitan churches. On his way back to Florence, he painted at Gaeta and Rimini some frescoes which have quite perished. These were his last works in painting, with the exception of some produced during a brief visit to Milan in 1335, for which he obtained the permission of the government to absent himself from the superintendence of the Cathedral and Campanile. The year previous he had been made master of the works of the Cathedral, and chief

* I may here say once for all that owing to my ignorance of the Italian language, and the small amount of time at my disposal, it has been out of my power to undertake that research amongst the MSS. stored in the public libraries of Italy by which alone could the accurate chronology of Giotto's life be determined.

builder to the city of Florence; and while he was still engaged upon his bell tower and the cathedral façade, before his eyes had lost their lustre, or his hand its cunning, he died suddenly in 1336.

Such is the life of our old master as far as we can gather it from the scanty materials before us: to what does it amount? That a boy showed signs of genius; that a man fulfilled his early promise; that a great painter was for once a prophet in his own country and in his own time; and that all history can tell us of him, is that he made bad jokes, and had six ugly children. Such, I say, is the history of Giotto as I have gathered it from the chronicles of Vasari, Baldinucci, and Lanzi, Kugler, Rumohr, Crowe, and Jameson; but there is another history of the man, of greater worth and fuller meaning than can be found in these musty records; there is that which the painter has written with his own hand, in colours which yet retain much of their pristine brightness. The best record of the artist is neither his questionable witticisms, nor these rough outlines of his life, but that which shines forth clearly still on the walls of Santa Croce and the arches of Assisi. What that record means to us, I will try to explain.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHIEF FUNCTION OF PAINTING.

"All honour and reverence to the divine beauty of form! Let us cultivate it to the utmost in men, women, and children—in our gardens and in our houses. But let us love that other beauty too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy. Paint us an angel if you can, with a *floating* violet robe and a face paled by the celestial light; paint us yet oftener a Madonna, turning her mild face upward and opening her arms to receive the divine glory; but do not impose upon us any æsthetic rules which shall banish from the region of art, those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands, those heavy clowns taking holiday in a dingy pot-house, those rounded backs and stupid weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world."—GEORGE ELIOT.

BEFORE I speak in detail of Giotto's pictures, it will be well to consider very shortly what are the chief characteristics of good painting, and in what proportion the beauty of form, of colour, sentiment and thought, should be combined, in order to give us work of the highest order. And such a preliminary inquiry is the more needful, since the whole history of art is the history of the development of one or more of these characteristics, rather than the development of their just combination. If we look back at the greatest schools of the fifteenth century, we find that each of them had one main object in their art, which they pursued to the detriment of the others. However much, for instance, we may admire the feeling of Raphael, we perceive the lack of the

qualities which we find in Titian—however much we delight in Titian or Tintoretto, we feel that there is something lacking which we had in Raphael. And so on with every school, till at last we discover that the deficiency is not one in the individual painter, but is rather owing to the end which he and those of his school proposed to themselves; and whether it be the Florentine striving after expression of emotion, or the Venetian after expression of the truths of shade and colour, each is alike defective. In later times this becomes still more evident in the works of the Dutch painters, and it may be seen at its utmost height in the works of the majority of modern artists, whose aim is commonly restricted not only to one phase of feeling, but to one special manifestation of such phase; not to the seeking of colour, say, as the main object, but to the seeking of one particular colour.

If then every art school which the world has hitherto known, has been in some way partial in its choice of subject and the aims it has proposed to itself, let us think which partiality is the least blameable, and, in fact, what is the best thing that a painter can give us. Is it perfection of form, or of colour, intensity of feeling, or depth of meaning? If we can't have all, what should we choose first and cling to most securely?

Now, at the present day, there is amongst those who care for art, a rapidly-increasing class who give a most decided answer to this question; one, which if we can at all accept its reasoning, will settle the matter for ever. "Art," they say, "has but one real province, that of the simply sensuous; in whatever degree you admit other elements you so far weaken the art." To use the expression of a member of this school, what is wanted is "a solid sensuousness."

Now whatever else is true, this is false—"falser than all fancy painted;" and, should it once come to be believed, will reduce art to a worse slavery than the one from which Giotto

rescued it. It would really be hard to conceive that such a notion was really abroad did we not read it in book, essay, and article, and see the consequences of its prevalence in the works of our painters. Just think: here we have an influence notoriously one of the most powerful in the world, one that appeals equally to both sexes, to all classes, ages, and nations of men; and we are asked, or rather told, with the true *sic volo, sic jubeo* accent, that we must use it for but one thing, and that is the encouragement of sensuous pleasure. It is so utterly contrary to truth, and productive of such evil results, that I really lack the patience to speak of it and its exponents with common courtesy. But leaving on one side the injurious effects of such a doctrine, it is worth while to observe that it is really destructive of art itself. The one vital principle of all art is its freedom; its concern with every fact of nature or humanity, whether it be the form of a cabbage or the sufferings of a Christ. Take your solid sensuous feeling and welcome, but don't forget that that's but one, and a comparatively unimportant, fragment of men's nature; and give us also their power of endurance, their moments of rapture, their deeds of heroism, their every-day sufferings, and their rarer joys. I put that quotation from George Eliot at the top of the chapter, because it expresses far more clearly and beautifully than any words that lie in my power, this essential fact, that art is concerned with no one phase of human feeling or external nature, but finds adequate material in whatever is connected with men's lives.

Well, then, leaving on one side this pestilential heresy of art for art's sake, this talk about gracious curves, and sensuous images, secrets, twilights, silences, and all the rest of the jargon; we find on thinking over the subject carefully, that there is one truth, which art from its very nature is more fitted to express than any other, and indeed that it is a truth which can and should enter into every work of art,

and that is the truth of beauty. The more we see of the world and its varying actions and interests, the more certainly do we discover one fact, that there is a kernel of beauty beneath almost the roughest husks and rinds of human nature, and that in the natural world there is also a beauty far superior to that which lies on the surface, a subtle essence of loveliness only to be perceived by earnest students, after long and patient study. All the subtler and rarer manifestations of this beauty, are necessarily disregarded by the mass of men engaged in the hard struggle of life, and it is these which form the great province of the artist. His work is to say to us in his picture "Look at this subject! It is beautiful, not only as you would have thought, for its arrangement of line and colour and the interest of its composition, but because I have penetrated into the depth of the meaning involved; I have seen something which you would not have seen, but yet something which was there, and if you think, you will see that it must have been so." Every picture worthy of the name of great, is thus a record of penetrative insight as well as mere skill of painting; and the greater it is, the nearer it approaches in the complexity of its meaning to the personality of a human being, and receives a different interpretation from every one who sees it.

Again, of landscape painting, why is it that a picture of any natural scene will move hundreds of people who would have derived little or no enjoyment from the scene itself? Why, for instance, could Fred Walker paint a street at Cookham or a country lane in a shower, so as to give an amount of pleasure quite incommensurate with the importance or loveliness of his subject? It is because he saw in it a beauty which cannot be seen, except through him; for it is a beauty made up of the scene itself and his actual feelings about it. Could you photograph instantaneously lane and figures, and rain clouds, in the very colours of nature, you

would not gain a picture which would affect you in as powerful a way. Who ever derived real pleasure from a photograph of a landscape? Nature is beautiful always, but representations of nature made by machinery have little beauty, and no interest. I cannot dwell upon this theme—it would lead me too far from my subject—suffice it to say, that in landscape, no less than in figure painting, it is the spiritual insight of the painter which gives the highest value to his work.*

To sum up shortly—truth of form, and colour, and expression, will make a fine, perhaps even an impressive picture, but hardly a great one; in order to do that the artist must be possessed of the power of seizing the essence of the scene, of penetrating beneath the first commonplace view of the subject, and finding every element of true meaning and beauty which lies in his subject. If he once does this, he is a true artist, and his errors of detail will become fewer and fewer with time; if he fails in this first requisite, if he has no story to tell except one that every one of his spectators could tell equally well, then, no matter what may be his technical perfection, he will never be a great artist to the end of time. To close this somewhat long, but, I think, necessary digression, just remember what art was when Giotto's work began. It was in a condition of double bondage, first to the service of the Catholic Church, and second to itself, in the perpetuation of traditional methods of work.

Always representing the same thing in the same way, its records had become little more than variations in the arrangement of coloured draperies. Every detail of the composition was executed upon a given plan; the very position of the Virgin's head and the Saviour's hands were absolutely conventional. The study of animals was almost unknown; that

* Those who are interested in this subject will find an article discussing it in the *Spectator* of November 10th, 1877, entitled "The Human Element in Landscape Painting."

of landscape nature absolutely so; all attempt at expression of any feeling but resignation, devotion, or divine peacefulness was perfectly discontinued; laughter, curiosity, or scorn, might have had no existence, for any trace of them which can be found in the pictures of the time. A picture was then nothing but a composition of traditionally graceful lines and pleasant colours, set against a gold background, and offered generally to the service of the Church, in much the same spirit as the coloured German prints of the Madonna are hung up at the little road-side shrines in Italy to this day.

In fact, art was very much in the way to which some good people of the present day would reduce it, and represented nothing save in a partial and symbolical manner. It was wholly unconnected with all the varying incidents and emotions of real life, and existed only to give form to certain traditions, and fulfil certain prescriptive offices. Its aim was not to become of real use to man, to enter into his joys and griefs, to console, and to enlighten him, but only to serve as a faithful servant to the Church. Painting had gazed so long at things heavenly, as to have almost forgotten there was an earth at all, and so to the very ordinary-minded people who fortunately compose nine-tenths of the world's population, its influence was too remote to have much significance. It might represent saints, martyrs, and angels faithfully, but what was wanted were true representations of men and women.

Bearing this well in mind, let us examine Giotto's works, and see what change, if any, he effected in the popular practice, and what is the peculiar merit of his works at this day, when we are six hundred years further on the march of progress.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EARLY WORK OF GIOTTO AT FLORENCE AND ROME.

BUT little remains to us of the work of Giotto's student days, and those years immediately following; but sufficient is known to show that his first works were, as we should naturally expect, executed in Florence itself.

The following description of some of these frescoes is taken from Vasari. "The first pictures of Giotto were painted for the Chapel of the High Altar in the Abbey of Florence, where he executed many works considered extremely fine. Among these an *Annunciation* is particularly admired; the expression of fear and astonishment in the countenance of the Virgin, when receiving the salutation of Gabriel, is vividly depicted;* she appears to suffer the extremity of terror, and seems almost ready to take flight. The altarpiece of that chapel is also by Giotto; but this has been, and continues to be, preserved,† rather from the respect felt for the work of so distinguished a man, than from any other motive."

The large *Madonna Enthroned*, of which we speak at length a little further on, was also executed at this period. This was painted for the altar of the church of the Ognissanti,

* How a certain reviewer would have scoffed at Giotto for representing the Virgin in this manner!

† It has been removed since, and its whereabouts is not now known.

and is probably the first quite certain work which now remains of this master. There is a Madonna in the Brera Gallery at Milan which, if Giotto's work, probably belongs to an early period, but is (according to Professor Dobbert) of a less formal character; but I have not seen this work, and cannot speak as to its authenticity or character.

Giotto also painted at this time in the church of the Carmine,* which was burnt in 1771, but a few of these frescoes were rescued and engraved by Thomas Patch;† according to Waagen, two of these fragments are in Liverpool, one in the collection of Mr. Rogers, and others in the Campo Santo of Pisa. The picture in the National Gallery attributed to Giotto is a fragment of one of these frescoes, and represents the heads of two of the apostles. Whether these two heads are by Giotto's own hand is almost impossible to say, but they are in any case works of his school, and of an early period. Judging by the type of face, I should think it less probable of the two uncertainties that they were executed by Giotto; but the matter is of little importance, as the qualities they possess chiefly are not those we find in Giotto's work. The two heads are genuine early fresco at all events. There are several other works in the refectory, Pisa, attributed to Giotto by Vasari, amongst which are a *Tree of the Cross*, a Last Supper, and scenes from the life of St. Louis, a figure of the Virgin, and a St. John and the Magdalene at the foot of the cross; the last three of which are now concealed by whitewash, and the authorship of any of the pictures in the refectory is considered doubtful by Rumohr. Of the two series of panels

* There is a dispute about the period when these frescoes were executed, but the weight of evidence is in favour of their having been done at the earliest period of Giotto's artistic career.

† Mr. Thomas Patch does not seem to have appreciated the master much, for he can see little difference between his work and that of the other painters of the same period, *e.g.* the Sienese and Pisan schools.

illustrating the lives of Christ and St. Francis, I have spoken at length below; it is sufficient here to say that Vasari assigns them to Giotto.

Vasari makes Giotto execute various paintings, amongst them the whole Assisi series, and the frescoes (since discovered not to be by this master) in the Campo Santo of Pisa, between these early works and his visit to Rome. This, however, is impossible, from the date of that visit being fixed by strong evidence between the years 1296 and 1298, which leaves the young painter the barest time possible to execute his numerous early works in Florence after his six years' apprenticeship to Cimabue. In 1296, however, occurred the incident of the O related elsewhere, and in that or the following year Giotto visited Rome at the invitation of Pope Boniface VIII.*

According to Vasari, he here executed a large picture in the sacristy of St. Peter's, "with five others in the church itself—these last being passages from the life of Christ; all of which he executed with so much care, that no better work in distemper ever proceeded from his hands. . . . . The Pope having seen these works of Giotto, whose manner pleased him infinitely, commanded that he should paint subjects from the Old and New Testaments entirely around the walls of St. Peter's; and for a commencement the artist executed in fresco the angel seven toreccecia high, which is now over the organ: this was followed by many other pictures, of which some have been restored in our own days, while more have been either destroyed in laying the foundations of the new walls, or have been taken from the old edifice of St. Peter's and set under the organ, as is the case with a Madonna that was cut out of the wall that it might not totally be destroyed, and being supported with beams and

* According to Baldinucci, Vasari says Benedict IX., and Crowe and Cavalcaselle, Benedict XI. (1303). *Vide* supra, p. 35.

bars of iron was thus carried away and secured for its beauty in the place wherein the pious love which the Florentine doctor, Messer Nicolo Acciainoli, has ever borne to the excellent in art, desired to see it enshrined, and where he has richly adorned the work of Giotto with a framework composed of modern pictures and of ornaments in stucco. The picture in mosaic known as the *Navicella*, and which stands above the three doors of the portico in the vestibule of St. Peter's, is also from the hand of Giotto—a truly wonderful work, and deservedly eulogised by all enlightened judges; and this not only for the merit of the design, but also for that of the grouping of the apostles, who labour in various attitudes to guide their boat through the tempestuous sea, while the winds blow in a sail which is swelling with so vivid a reality that the spectator could almost believe himself to be looking at a real sail. Yet it must have been excessively difficult to produce the harmony and interchange of light and shadow which we admire in this work, with mere pieces of glass, and that in a sail of such magnitude—a thing which even with the pencil could only be equalled by great effort. There is a fisherman also standing on a rock and fishing with a line, in whose attitude the extraordinary patience proper to that occupation is most obvious, while the hope of prey and his desire for it are equally manifest in his countenance."

The above must be taken for what it is worth, as all the works named in the quotation have perished, with the exception of the *Navicella* and one other.* I have preferred to quote Vasari's description of the *Navicella* to any more elaborate one, for its simplicity, and a certain strain of honest enthusiasm rare in contemporary criticism. The remark about the extraordinary patience of the fisherman, and his

* Portrait of Boniface VIII. preserved under glass in the church. Ed. Flor.

mingled hope and desire for prey, is delightful in its unconscious satire. This mosaic still remains, but so defaced by restoration as to have little traces of the original which roused Vasari's enthusiasm.

The production of these various works in Rome occupied Giotto six years, at the end of which he returned to Florence in the year 1302, and was employed to paint frescoes in the hall of the Podesta, or as it is now more commonly called the Bargello. I found it impossible, as I have said above, on examining these frescoes carefully, to believe that the greater portion of them were executed by Giotto;* and owing to damp and restoration the majority have suffered so severely, as to render it a question of little but antiquarian interest whose work they originally were. The large fresco of the *Paradise* at the end of the chapel, in which are the famous portraits of Dante and Corso Donati, has been greatly restored, especially the Dante head, which has been wholly re-painted. The portrait, nevertheless, is one of great interest, and the spirit of the composition has been preserved by the restorer, though the painting itself is hard and heavy compared with the untouched work of our master.

It was shortly after the execution of this work, that Giotto prepared the designs for the façade of the Duomo, which were executed by Andrea Pisano; and in the succeeding year Giotto married, and shortly afterwards removed to Padua.

The large *Madonna Enthroned*, by Giotto, bears the greatest resemblance to the manner of Cimabue of any of this master's work. Before the throne, which is raised on two high steps, and surrounded with a canopy and pillars crowned by Gothic arches, kneel two angels in white, each bearing a vase

* I may perhaps mention that Mr. Fairfax Murray, who accompanied me to the Bargello, and gave me his valuable opinion as to the authorship of the frescoes, also felt certain of Giotto only having painted one or two of the number.

of flowers in her hand; on either side of the throne appear six saints and angels. The Madonna is heavily painted, and clothed in a white under-robe, with a long blue-green mantle covering the lower portion of the figure. The Virgin gazes straight out of the picture with something of the peculiar lack-lustre gaze so invariably found in the pictures of the Byzantine masters, and which was seldom absent from the faces of Cimabue himself. The two front angels on the east side of the throne are in green, and offer to the Virgin a model of the church (in which the picture was to serve as an altarpiece) and a crown. The infant Christ has his hand raised as if to address the spectator; in his face there is little of the infantine playfulness or expression which is to be found in Giotto's later work, as, for instance, in the fresco of the *Presentation in the Temple* in the Arena Chapel, where the infant Christ is struggling to escape from the high priest to the Virgin, who stretches her arms towards him. Indeed, throughout this picture, there is hardly to be found a trace of the characteristic merits of Giotto's later work, and it must have been executed in the early days of his apprenticeship to Cimabue, whose method of arrangement has been almost slavishly copied. The type of face, however, both of the Virgin and the Christ, are of a broader, heavier type than in the Byzantine model, the chin fuller and less retreating, the eye less elliptical, and the expression, though somewhat blank, has not that drooping, half-dreamy look of the older schools. If we turn from this Madonna, to the gigantic one by Cimabue which hangs on the opposite side of the entrance in the Accademia, we can see clearly the advance made by Giotto even in this early work. Besides the differences above mentioned, there is a fresher, more life-like air about the whole picture; the figures are arranged less for graceful lines, and more in accordance with nature; the drapery is not so severely conventional in the arrangement of its folds,

there is a nearer approach to the sweeping curves of nature than to the formal vertical lines which had grown common from the imitation of Byzantine mosaics.

When, however, all these differences are noted and allowed their full value, we can only conclude that this work of Giotto's is one of his earliest and least spontaneous productions, and that the colour in it must have suffered great deterioration. Like nearly all the pictures painted upon panel of this period, the colour has probably darkened and lost much of its original beauty, and this will perhaps account for the work having little of that purity of tint that is so noticeable in Giotto's frescoes. Of the ten small scenes from the life of St. Francis, which are generally attributed to Giotto, the same remarks apply as to the series of scenes from the New Testament spoken of below, and the assertion must be reiterated that there is no reason to attribute either of these series to the hand of Giotto, the colouring especially being contrary to the general work of that master. There is a crude vermilion tint employed in almost every one of these panels that may be sought for in vain in any of the frescoes at Padua, Assisi, or in the Santa Croce at Florence.

With regard to the twenty-two small designs on panel which are in the Accademia under the title of being portions of the great altarpiece at Santa Maria Novella, it scarcely admits of doubt that they are bad imitations of the master rather than specimens of even his earliest work. If we take the slightest of the drawings in the Arena Chapel and compare them with one of these panels, we shall find a total dissimilarity, both in colour and design. These works do not err on the side of incompleteness of design or a tentative method of execution. They rather belong to a school which carries its execution farther than its thought, and is in fact a complacent imitation of the work of Giotto. I see in these

no traces of Giotto's work, though many traces of his manner, and feel sure that if these designs belong in any way to Giotto, they must have been utterly spoilt in the re-painting. They do not, however, seem to me to have been his designs, as even in the sadly-spoilt frescoes in the Bargello, can the traces of the master's handiwork be clearly seen, despite damp, whitewash, and restoration, and it is excessively improbable that these smaller panels should have needed or received equal alteration.

They are in all probability the work of Taddeo Gaddi, or one of his pupils; but this is hardly the place to enter upon the discussion of their authorship, further than to explain it not to belong to the hand of Giotto.

In the chapel of the Castellani, in the Santa Croce, is the crucifix generally ascribed to Giotto by Lord Lindsay and other writers, but it is difficult to discover any ground, save such as is derived from popular tradition, for such an assumption. The lines of the figure are stiff and formal, the colour lifeless and heavy, and the whole work seems to belong to the Sienese school in the character of the design. It should be noted that this work is set far back behind a double row of huge pewter candlesticks, and great branches of artificial flowers, and is placed immediately beneath the only window that lights the chapel, so that it is impossible to speak with certainty of the merits of the colouring. A curious instance of the difficulty of deciding a work to be by Giotto on account of the merit or originality of the design is to be seen in this very chapel, where there are seven frescoes on the right of the crucifix, by Agnolo Gaddi, which are full of so-called Giottesque traits. Very evidently Giotto's influence was in the air, and the very winds of heaven seem to have carried the matter. In the Baroncelli Chapel we have an opportunity of comparing undoubted works by Taddeo Gaddi with those frescoes in the Upper Church at Assisi, which I have refused

to consider as Giotto's; but if these Florentine ones be by the same hand it has undoubtedly advanced in skill; the architecture, especially, is of a considerably more elaborate character, and is more akin to that of the Lower Church at Assisi. It must be noticed too that there is in these Gaddi frescoes, more observation of nature than in those of the Upper Church; in one composition alone are there no less than four different species of trees introduced into the background; orange, palm, a species of laurel, and a round-topped tree, which might be anything from a sycamore to a cedar. Various characteristics of Giotto's works are to be traced in these frescoes; the colouring is evidently an unsuccessful imitation, and gesture and action are used somewhat overmuch, without helping to tell the story, as we can fancy would be done by one trying to follow Giotto's method.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIOTTO AT PADUA.

"These temples grew as grows the grass:
Art might obey, but not surpass;
The passive master lent his hand
To the vast soul that o'er him planned,
And the same power that built the shrine
O'er the tribes that knelt therein."—*Emerson.*

FANCY a wet, cloudy, spring day in an old Italian town; the only objects visible in the little grass-grown square where the hotel stands, being two or three mournful carriages, with the sorriest steeds harnessed to them, that even Italian feeding can produce, and surrounding these, houses of mildewed stone, faced occasionally with brown plaster, large flakes of which are peeling off in every direction. The drivers have long since given up all hope of even a stray tourist, and ensconced themselves in the low wine-shop that you may see at the corner of the square, whence the sound of their voices and the smoke of their cigars, break forth occasionally into the heavy atmosphere.

Every now and then a slippered figure, with white stockings down at heel, and black stuff petticoat wrapped carefully over its head, hurries by on some domestic errand, or a stray dog limps dejectedly in and out of the carriage wheels, in search of stray scraps of sausage or cheese, which might indeed well be there, since the drivers eat both, pretty well all

day long. To close the picture, an Englishman in a tweed suit, staring contemplatively at the prospect from the doorway of the principal hotel, and wondering whether it was really worth while to travel half across Europe, in order to reach such a resting-place: wondering also whom he shall get to direct him to the Arena Chapel, for this is Padua, once most learned of universities, and now dullest of cities, and it is here that Giotto painted the Scrovegni Chapel from floor to ceiling.

After more or less contradictory directions and several fruitless attempts, I discovered the entrance to the enclosure wherein the chapel stands, and being by this time wet, tired, dirty, and considerably out of temper, immediately resolved to leave it to the next day to see the pictures, and returned to my hotel depressed in spirit, but trying to look forward to the morrow. All was unchanged in the square, save that the dog had departed, and the vetturini grown a trifle more noisy; so after a solitary dinner, wherein the landlord figured as sole attendant, and macaroni formed the principal dish, I turned into my room, and consoled myself with concocting an imaginary leader to the *Times* on the fallacy of believing that Italian weather was better than English, and so to bed.

Never was change more complete than that I woke to the next morning. A blazing sun, such as we see in July only, shone in the midst of a blue sky, and streamed brightly in upon the paved bedchamber, and a fresh little breeze rattled cheerfully to and fro the big window-shutters, and hinted at its being time to get up. A glance into the square revealed my vetturino friends cheerfully cracking their whips at imaginary flies, and, seated by the side of the fountain, a brown-skinned maiden in the whitest of linen and heaviest of earrings, was amicably partaking of a chunk of sausage, with the youngest of the party. The very dog had turned up again, and looked at least twice the size that he did yesterday,

and was sitting at a respectful distance from the last-named couple, watching for scraps with cheerful confidence.

Now, if ever, it appeared to me was the time for a first favourable impression of a great artist, and so, hurrying through dressing and breakfast, I started for the chapel. Venting the content of my soul as I went along, in the solitary Italian phrase I was master of, I waved my hand to the young coachman, and said, *chi bel' tempo.* He looked down at his dark-eyed damsel; she was sitting on the step of the carriage by this time, and if ever a coachman agreed with any one, which is doubtful, that young fellow did with me; though I gathered his assent merely from his eloquent looks, for of what he said I have not the faintest conception.

So, like Æneas, with hope and fortune favouring me, I drew near to the great wooden gate which marks the entrance to the Arena. The large gates are immovable, but a little lattice door opens if you push it deftly at the right moment after having rung the bell, and on entering, you see a long garden, where currants and apple-trees, acacias and vines, almonds and poplars, are all mixed together in a confusion of greenery. At the end of the narrow gravel walk rises a house, not unlike an English suburban villa, much out of repair, in front of which two or three small children are tumbling about in perilous proximity to an old well, while at what should be the dining-room window, stands a girl twisting up her long, black hair, with the most perfect composure. Anything more delightfully unlike the usual aspect of a show place could hardly be imagined, and at first (not being able to see the chapel at all) I thought I had mistaken my direction for the third time, but there was the servant evidently getting ready to receive me, and, as I had undoubtedly rung the bell, I walked boldly up to the house.

A few steps explained the matter. The chapel stands to the right of the house, at the edge of the orchard, and the

PADUA.

From a drawing by the Author.

servant was doing up her hair previous to bringing out the keys. The chapel outside is simply a barn-shaped building, with a gable roof, absolutely undecorated in any way whatever, unless a round-arched door, with the remains of a very small fresco above it, can be called decorative. The entrance is at the west end of the building, which is lighted from the south side only, by six long narrow windows. The gable roof hardly projects at all beyond the walls. The whole appearance of the chapel being somewhat like those box-like constructions drawn by children, to represent a house. If it be a proper criticism to call a thing ugly which has only been constructed for a certain purpose, and which has fulfilled that purpose fairly well for six hundred years, the Scrovegni Chapel may fairly be called by that name; but personally I must confess to a feeling of gratification at finding there was absolutely no attempt at architectural embellishment in the whole building, and many will probably share this feeling. Knowing that the interior was absolutely covered with frescoes, each of which was almost priceless, it seemed to me appropriate, both to the pictures, and the simplicity of style in the master who executed them, that their covering should be not sculptured marble or vaulted stone, but simply plain, honest building.

After all the chapel was hardly more to the frescoes than is the canvas to the picture, and it afforded a refreshing contrast to the way in which things are done nowadays, to remember that Enrico Scrovegni,* wishing to build a temple to the honour, and for the service of, the Virgin, thought it more necessary to give her the work of genius within her shrine, than to adorn its exterior with costly materials and sculptured ornament. Given that it was a choice between Giotto's frescoes and elaborate architectural design (and we

* See note at the end of this chapter for Ruskin's account of the chapel's use and its founder.

may suppose that a plain citizen could not afford both), then we can look at this homely building with pleasure rather than repulsion, as we do at the rough coating of some precious stone. And if we do not grumble at the plainness of the building, still less will we do so at its position in the quaint garden-close, where flickering shadows from the bright leaves of the acacias dot the gravel path, and where from behind the chapel rises the humming of the custodian's bee-hives.*

Is not this such a surrounding as we might best desire for our painter's work? In front of his masterpieces, an orchard green and gay, with trembling leaves and flashing sunshine, and human with the soft voices of laughing children; and behind, a rich meadow, where a few cattle doze lazily through their time, and long ranges of bee-hives stand in the very shadow of the chapel; and if the eye lifts its gaze from meadow and orchard, with a sense of something wanting to the full agreement of the surroundings and the painter's mind, it meets the great dome of the neighbouring church rising against the cloudless sky, as it might in one of Giotto's own frescoes, and is satisfied. So with the rustling of the leaves, and the murmur of the bees in our ears, and something of the bright sunshine in our hearts, we enter the chapel where the custodian waits patiently enough, having had experience of many tourists and their foolish ways.

A long vaulted chamber plainly divided by a high arch into nave and chancel, lighted by six high narrow windows, all on the right hand wall, the entire interior surface covered with frescoes, three tiers of which run from the ceiling to within about eight feet of the ground; at intervals, below this lowest tier, there are other frescoes of smaller size in monochrome, symbolical of the various Christian virtues and vices,

* I beg the custodian's pardon, for on going to the chapel again this year, I find that it is the Royal Society of Api-Culture who are responsible for the dozen or so of hives.

surrounded by craftily painted borders, imitating mosaic of coloured marbles. . . .

Wherever the eye turns it meets a bewilderment of colour pure and radiant, and yet restful to the eye; tints which resemble in their perfect harmony of brightness the iridescence of a shell, and seem to be possessed of something of the same strange quality of imprisoned light. From the blue ceiling, with its medallions and golden stars, to the lowest range of mosaic, there is literally not a spot where the eye cannot rest with pleasure; and the whole interior, owing perhaps to its perfect simplicity of form, and the absence of all other decoration than the frescoes, presents less the aspect of a building ornamented with paintings, than that of some gigantic opal in the midst of which the spectator stands.

It is difficult to speak without seeming exaggeration of the effect produced, or to attempt to convey to those of my readers who are not familiar with the spot, the peculiar qualities of the colouring in these paintings. In England, and to the majority of Englishmen, pure colour, bright colour, and *staring* colour, are almost interchangeable terms, and depth of colour is but too frequently understood to mean depth of *shadow*. Now you must quite get rid of the idea that the colouring of these frescoes is crude or violent, because I call it "pure."

If there is one quality of our master's work which is more certain than another, it is the general harmony of his tints, the absence of any discordant effect from his paintings. The great difference between his system of colouring and that of later masters is, that his harmony is gained by means of the combination of broad masses of comparatively simple tints, while later artists discovered that by paying greater attention to the gradation of colour, its subtle variations of light and shade, and its enhancement by means of complementary tints, they could produce a greater truth to nature, as well as a greater amount of colour beauty, than in any other way

—and one, moreover, which was applicable to all the varying conditions of nature. Giotto's system was one which he would have been the first to discard, had it occurred to him to paint a picture save in full daylight, for its beauty is incompatible with any other effect. It must always be remembered in thinking of his work, that he was the successor of men who absolutely banished shadow from their pictures; for the gloomy hues of the older Byzantine pictures were not representative of shadow, any more than their rich tones represented light; and Giotto's master, Cimabue, had revolted from the darkness of his predecessors' pictures to comparatively light tints.

It was, of course, impossible for Giotto to work out an entire system of chiaroscuro for himself (as a matter of fact it took another two hundred years to accomplish that advance); the marvel is that by his exquisite arrangement of tint he was able to compose pictures which are to this day comparable in colour beauty to those of the great masters of succeeding ages, though they are not comparable in subtlety of colour, nor is there ever such beauty of a special colour gained as in the work of the later artists.*

The series of paintings comprises illustrations of the apocryphal history of Joachim and Anna, the Virgin's parents, the life of the Virgin up to the period of the Annunciation, and finally, a set of illustrations of the life and passion of Jesus Christ, culminating in a fresco above the choir showing Him enthroned in glory. Thus the series forms one connected history, supplementing which there is on the great wall above the door a representation of the last judgment. Every fresco is surrounded by a frame, painted in imitation of coloured

* It would take me at least a page to justify and define this assertion. I must trust my readers to understand that it is written in no depreciation of later artists, and that it only refers to colour as seen in light, scarcely modified at all by shade.

PARADISE.

FRESCO BY GIOTTO.

IN THE CAPPELLA DELL' ARENA, PADUA.

(*Greatly restored.*)

mosaic, and at intervals, beneath the lowest row of the scenes from the life of Christ, there are representations of the Virtues, each of which has its corresponding Vice facing it upon the opposite side of the chapel. In the arrangement it should be noticed that each Virtue has its head turned to the portion of the Last Judgment fresco representing Heaven, or to the fresco of Christ in Glory; each Vice looks towards the portion representing Hell. These symbolical figures are in greyish green, with occasionally a background of dull red; the historical works are in various colours.

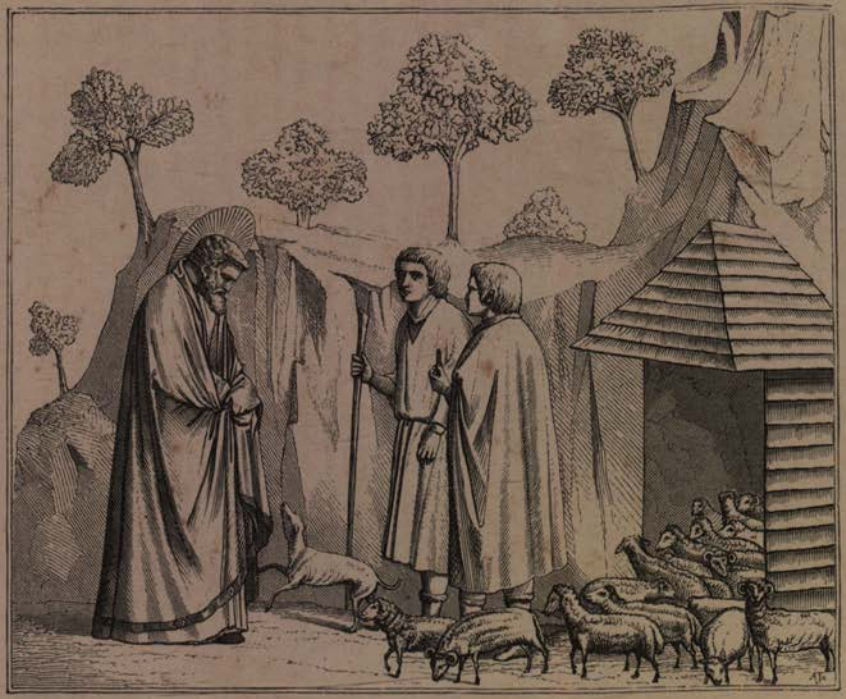
This arrangement is probably due in some measure to the rules of Byzantine art, but here the resemblance ends; nothing can be more original, owing less to tradition, than the composition of the various pictures in this series. They are not so much an improvement upon Byzantine art, as a wholly new departure; the difference is something like that between the gallop of a horse, and the fierce rush of a locomotive, not only a greater pace, but a changed mode of progression. It is difficult to see how the one could have ever developed into the other, and there is no clue left, save such as may be found in that lonely shepherd life led by the young artist, amidst the olive groves and grey hills of Vespignano. I subjoin a table of the subjects of these series in the order in which they here occur; but I do not propose to weary my readers with a description of the composition of each picture; it will be sufficient if I indicate the main features of a few of the most important.*

* Throughout this book I have purposely avoided, wherever it was possible, long descriptions of the subject matter of the pictures mentioned. The almost inevitable tendency of such description, unless it is done with the greatest reticence as well as skill, is to withdraw the reader's attention from the artist, either to the author or the subject spoken of, and as my main endeavour in writing this book has been to bring the peculiarities of the artist into constant prominence, it would have defeated my purpose to enter into descriptive writing.

The order of the drawings in the Arena Chapel is as follows:—

1. Joachim's Offering rejected by the High Priest.
2. Joachim retires to the Sheepfold.
3. The Angel appears to Anna.
4. The Sacrifice of Joachim.
5. The Angel appears to Joachim.
6. The Meeting of Joachim and Anna.
7. The Birth of the Virgin Mary.
8. The Presentation of the Virgin.
9. The Rods are brought to the High Priest.
10. The Watching of the Rods at the Altar.
11. The Espousal of the Virgin Mary.
12. The Virgin Mary returns to her Home.
13. The Annunciation—the Angel Gabriel.
14. The Annunciation—the Virgin Mary.
15. The Marriage of the Virgin.
16. The Salutation.
17. The Nativity.
18. The Wise Men's Offering.
19. The Presentation in the Temple.
20. The Flight into Egypt.
21. The Massacre of the Innocents
22. The Young Christ in the Temple.
23. The Baptism of Christ.
24. The Marriage in Cana.
25. The Baptism of Lazarus
26. The Entry into Jerusalem.
27. The Expulsion from the Temple.
28. The Hiring of Judas.
29. The Last Supper.
30. The Washing of the Feet.
31. The Kiss of Judas.
32. Christ before Caiaphas.
33. The Scourging of Christ.
34. Christ bearing His Cross.
35. The Crucifixion.
36. The Entombment.
37. The Resurrection.
38. The Ascension.
39. The Descent of the Holy Spirit.

The first of this series which deserves especial attention is that numbered two in the above table, the representation of Joachim's retirement to the sheepfold, after his offering has been rejected by the high priest. This is especially remarkable as being the first of his series of the Arena frescoes in which Giotto's early training shows itself. Nothing can be more marked than the evident delight of the painter in depicting any form of this shepherd life. Throughout his works every opportunity of introducing animal nature, especially sheep nature, is eagerly seized and made the most of, and, as in this fresco, the animals have invariably a character of their own, and are by no means walking gentlemen in the scene represented. Look, for instance, at the varied



JOACHIM RETIRES TO THE SHEEPFOLD. BY GIOTTO.

In the Cappella dell' Arena, Padua.

action of the sheep in this composition, and the eager welcome that Joachim's dog is giving to his master. In the third and fourth pictures, too, of the *Sacrifice of Joachim*, and the subsequent appearance of the angel, is the delight of the painter in animal idiosyncrasies apparent, as in the two rams butting at one another, and the air of quiet watchfulness in which the dog lies down. with a sense of responsibility strong upon him.

The *Meeting of Joachim and Anna*, chiefly remarkable for the grace and beauty of the two leading figures; it is somewhat curious to notice how the position of Anna's head suggests that of a famous modern picture, perhaps the most celebrated ever painted in England, the *Huguenots*, by Mr. J. E. Millais, R.A. *A propos* of this fresco, Mr. Ruskin remarks, that the artist has heightened the effect of the leading figures by wilfully coarsening the features of the subordinate characters, and that the horizontal lines of the architecture enhance by contrast the beauty of the curved draperies. I am, however, inclined to think that the first of these contrasts is accidental, as the type of face of the servants in this composition, is found throughout the minor characters in Giotto's pictures; indeed, it may be noticed that, whether from his own uncomeliness, or some other more recondite reason, the painter had a curious difficulty in depicting beautiful faces, that belongs to him alone of contemporary masters. This does not apply to beauty of gesture or line, to which he was excessively sensitive.

8. The *Presentation of the Virgin*—the Virgin represented not as a child, but, as Lord Lindsay remarks, a dwarf woman. The figure of Anna in this picture is one of the least graceful in Giotto's works.

10. The *Watching of the Rods at the Altar*.—Chiefly characteristic as showing Giotto's power of seizing the expression in the simplest actions, which is most characteristic of the subject; in this fresco the eagerness of the watchers is shown with a quite unmistakeable plainness, especially in

the three centre figures, though all of these have their backs more or less turned to the spectator.

11. The *Espousal of the Virgin.*—Some of the figures in this composition are very fine, such, for instance, as those of Joseph, the high priest, and the youth behind, who is in the act of breaking the rod over his knee. Mr. Ruskin remarks of this last figure that in Perugino's treatment of the same subject (at Cannes) there is "nothing in the action of the disappointed suitors so perfectly true and touching as that of the youth breaking his rod in this composition of Giotto."

12. The *Return of the Virgin Mary to her Home.*—The figure of the violin-player in this composition is remarkable, not only for its beauty, but for being identical with that of one of the attendants in the fresco of the *Daughter of Herodias dancing before Herod*, in the Santa Croce at Florence. It is a very quiet picture, full of slow movement and dignified garce, but a little wanting in the variety of action which is generally characteristic of Giotto's work, and more severe in the lines of the drapery.

13. The *Annunciation*—the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. These are two single figures which together encircle the arch above the entrance to the choir of the chapel, and are as beautiful as any of the compositions; especially fine is the attitude of the lines of drapery of the angel's figure. Giotto seems not to have attempted to render the Virgin's face beautiful either in expression or feature.

16. The *Salutation*—almost the first fresco where Giotto's full powers are seen. I know no two figures more finer in their way than those of the Virgin and Elizabeth. Here the plainness of Mary's face seems quite obscured by the beauty of its expression, and every line of the two figures helps to tell the story. This picture is smaller than the others, owing to its place beneath the figure of the Virgin in the *Annunciation*, and is nearly bare of all background.

17. The *Nativity.*—This Nativity is doubly interesting from the fact of the subject being repeated at Assisi in the lower church* in the series generally attributed to Giotto. The one at Padua is as beautiful as any of the Arena frescoes, and in every way finer than the Assisi rendering, which latter is almost certainly the work of one of Giotto's pupils, and is as stiff and mechanical in its general arrangement as the former is easy and natural.

I need not enter into the reasons which have convinced me of Giotto not having personally executed the Assisi Nativity, as they are given at length in a subsequent chapter.† The varied action of the angels, the natural gestures of the Virgin and the shepherds and the quiet harmony of blue

* See Lower Church of Assisi, Chapter X.

† See Chapter on the Lower Church of Assisi, p. 111.

and grey colour (in which this fresco in almost entirely painted), are especially worthy of notice. Very noticeable too are the attentive animals, and the natural manner in which the Virgin turns half round in her bed to place the child in its attendant's arms. On the right are the shepherds listening to the angels, who fly hither and thither above the mountain background; on the left, the ox and ass stretching their heads towards the Virgin's couch.

18. The *Adoration of the Magi.*—The composition of this fresco in it leading figures is very fine, and somewhat more elaborate than customary in this series. The artist has tried very hard to get some expression of interest in the camel, who is being held by an attendant on the left of the picture, and has actually succeeded to some extent, despite the Noah's-ark-like appearance of the animal, caused no doubt by Giotto's insufficient acquaintance with its shape.

19. The *Presentation in the Temple.*—There are two incidents in this scene, for the right interpretation of the latter of which I am indebted to Mr. Ruskin. The first of them is the naturalism of the child, which is evidently struggling to leave the high priest's arms and get back to its mother, who holds out her arms to receive it; the second being the approach of an angel to Simeon, who is supposed by Mr. Ruskin to typify the angel of death, "sent in visible fulfilment of the thankful words of Simeon: 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.'" The drapery of the Virgin in this fresco, though simple, is very fine.

20. The *Flight into Egypt.*—One of the simplest of the series. The colour in several places completely gone, as, for instance, in the Virgin's robe, which, originally blue, is now a yellowish white, the dark shadow of the drapery alone remaining. The patient pace of the tired ass on which the Virgin is seated, if contrasted with that of the one on which Christ is riding in the fresco of the *Entry into Jerusalem*, will show how minute was Giotto's observation and appreciation of animal life.

21. The *Murder of the Innocents.*—Perhaps the least pleasing of the series, though no doubt much of its lack of beauty is owing to the change of colour which this fresco has sustained, a change which, from some unknown cause, has been much more radical than in most of this series. The composition could, however, have been at no time a beautiful one, and the heap of stiff wooden dolls (for such they seem) that represents the slaughtered innocents is simply ugly. The fresco, however, is full of action, and the figure of the leading executioner, who stands drawing back his sword to pierce the child, whom he holds head downwards in his left hand, is one of the most vigorous Giotto ever conceived.

22. The *Teaching of Christ in the Temple.*—This fresco is so much injured by damp as to be practically destroyed.

23. The *Baptism of Christ by John.*—Wholly Byzantine in its arrangement, especially in the water, which is depicted as a heavy green wall, reaching half way up the fresco and covering Christ's body as high as the chest. Mary and Joseph stand on the right bank, attendants on the left, Christ in the centre of the picture, with a glory streaming down upon him. It is somewhat curious to observe that Giotto has made a compromise in the garments of the Apostle John, and while clothing him in a pink robe, for the sake of the fresco's colour, has allowed a little bit of the camel's-hair garment to be seen beneath the long drapery.

24. The *Wedding in Cana.*—A touch of nature in the fat butler in the foreground, who is swigging away at the wine before taking it to the table; otherwise this fresco is one of the most commonplace of the series. It is worthy of notice that in all cases where Giotto has to represent a scene in which the actors are seated, the artist seems to lose much of his attractiveness; to become more commonplace. It is as if the dramatic instinct in him refused to work freely except when he could depict varied actions.

25. The *Raising of Lazarus.*—This is another fresco full of the various attitudes of surprise and energy in which Giotto delighted so much. The pose of the principal figure of the disciples should be noticed, as it is very characteristic of our artist, and occurs in many of his frescoes where surprise or grief has to be indicated. The body is bent slightly forward with the arms thrown abruptly back, the hand hollowed with the palm towards the ground, the fingers held together and the thumb as much spread out as possible. The figures of the two attendants in this fresco, who are raising the heavy slab which covered the tomb of Lazarus, are of very marked action; the one on the right trying to raise the slab to his shoulder, while the left-hand one, with feet planted firmly wide apart, is just bending to the strain of lifting his end of the stone from the ground, or as a rowing man would say, is just "getting his weight on."

26. The *Entry into Jerusalem.*—Greatly injured by damp but still interesting. Notice the figure of the woman, whose cloak has tumbled over her head in her excitement, and the haste with which the two boys in the background are climbing the palm-trees to get a good view.

27. The *Expulsion of the Money-changers.*—Like the last this composition is one of varied interest, but the left-hand portion of it having been considerably damaged by damp is scarcely intelligible. The attitude of Christ is energetic, and there is a fine contrast in feeling between the two money-changers on the right hand of the picture, one of whom shrinks away, while the other seems inclined to stand his ground, while the precipitation with which the goat is leaping out of the little pen is one of those little semi-burlesque touches of animal life which Giotto introduces whenever he gets a chance.

THE

ENTOMBMENT OF CHRIST.

FRESCO BY GIOTTO.

IN THE CAPPELLA DELL' ARENA, PADUA.

28. The *Hiring of Judas.*—A small composition of four figures, placed on the wall beneath the arch of the choir, immediately beneath the *Angel of the Annunciation.* Judas has already received the bag of money, and the high priest, with one finger raised, like a sort of ecclesiastical Dogberry, is just giving him his last instructions. The Devil, too, in the shape of a black hobgoblin, with claws and tail, is also giving the apostate advice, whispering it into his ear. The small fresco beneath this and in the corresponding place on the other side of the choir is simply painted with a representation of an arched ceiling, wall, and window, apparently intended to give the impression from a distance of there being a side transept to the choir.

29. The *Last Supper.*—In this, as in all his frescoes of seated figures, Giotto is less at home than usual. It is curious to notice that the attitude of John in this fresco is the same as was adopted in all the later renderings of this scene. The moment chosen is the usual one of the Saviour's speech—"He that dippeth his hand in the dish with me, the same shall betray me." *

30. The *Washing of the Feet.*—Very characteristic of Giotto and wonderfully true to life in the positions and actions of all concerned. Notice the apostle tying his sandal on the left of the picture, and the one who is about to have his feet washed, holding up his long robe lest it should get wet.

31. The *Betrayal.*—This composition is much more thickly filled with figures than most of the series, and is one of the finest, though hardly one of the most beautiful. The figures of Christ and Judas are both grand in their respective ways, and stand out vividly from the crowd that surrounds them. There is no mistake about what is transpiring; one does not have to look for the action in a middle of graceful lines, but it presents itself strongly and at the first glance. The figure of the high priest who points out Christ to the soldiery is also very fine, dignified and yet eager in action, and with a mixed expression of triumph and anxiety. In colour this fresco bears comparison with any in the chapel.

32. The *Trial.*—"And Pilate rent his garments," &c. Chiefly interesting for the very beautiful figure of Christ, who stands with hands tied and body slightly bent, half turned away from his judge, the face expressing

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* Almost the only artist who ever thoroughly vanquished the difficulty of representing the Last Supper, without stiffness of arrangement, was Tintoretto in his great picture in the Scuola San Rocco. The celebrated Leonardo fresco at Milan of this subject suffers in a measure from the same difficulty as Giotto's work, though in a less degree.

resignation, but in an even greater degree removedness from the scene around, possessed by some over-mastering idea.

33. The *Crown of Thorns.*—Here Giotto is again in a somewhat burlesque humour: the delight of those who are here mocking, tickling, pinching, and smiting Christ is evidently the ruling motive of the picture. It is noticeable that here there are only servants engaged in the derision and tormenting, not soldiers, according to the commoner rendering.

34. The *Bearing of the Cross.*—In this fresco the figures of both Christ and Mary are fine, that of Christ being similar to the attitude at the trial above referred to.

35. The *Crucifixion.*—One of the most beautiful of the series. The Magdalen kneels at the foot of the cross, weeping bitterly; St. John, half fainting, is supported by two disciples on the left of the picture; on the right the soldiers squabble over the division of Christ's robe; the Saviour looks down upon the Magdalen, and above the cross fly here and there angels.

36 and 37. The *Entombment* and the *Resurrection.*—These are the two most beautiful frescoes in the chapel, so beautiful that they throw all the others into comparative shade, and fortunately they are both little injured by damp. In the first, Christ is being prepared for burial by the disciples and the two Maries. The Magdalen supports his feet upon her knees; the Mother lays one arm upon his breast, whilst she raises his head towards her with the other in a last embrace. St. John bends over the body in Giotto's usual attitude of grief and horror; other disciples and attendants stand round weeping and watching; in the background are mountains, and above them a choir of angels.

In the *Resurrection*, the soldiers sleep beside the red porphyry tomb where Christ was laid, and on which, at head and foot, sit the white-winged, white-robed angels. Nearly in the centre kneels the Magdalen in a long robe of crimson, which shrouds her form from head to foot all but her face; to the extreme right of the picture stands Christ, half turning away from the kneeling woman, one arm outstretched as though warning her "*noli me tangere.*"

38 and 39. The *Ascension*, and the *Descent of the Holy Spirit.*—The former of these two frescoes, which form the concluding ones of the series, is very formal in its arrangement—the Christ being in the centre of the picture, with hands raised to the choir of angels, who hover on both sides. Below, the disciples are also in two groups, nor is there very much to dwell upon in their expression or gestures. The whole fresco seems as if Giotto had felt himself more fettered by the traditional manner of representing the scene, or less at liberty to treat it in his own peculiar fashion, than in the preceding scenes of the series. The *Descent of the*

"NOLI ME TANGERE."

FRESCO BY GIOTTO.

IN THE CAPPELLA DELL' ARENA, PADUA.

Holy Spirit is very similar in the arrangement of the seated figures to that of the *Last Supper*, and is only remarkable for its very delicate colouring.

This picture of the *Descent of the Holy Spirit* completes the series of the history of the Virgin and our Saviour, and we have only now to mention the symbolical figures in monochrome, which are painted at intervals beneath the lowest row of frescoes, and which it is probable were an after thought of Giotto's, possibly suggested to him by Dante, who, as I have said, was living at Padua during the time when Giotto was occupied in painting the Arena Chapel.

Be that as it may, it is the fact that in no other place does Giotto show much tendency towards symbolical representation; these are the only figures of the kind that we know to have been executed by his hand. In this arrangement all the Virtues are painted upon the right side of the chapel, and have their faces turned to the heavenly side of the great fresco above the door; the Vices are on the left, and look in like manner to the part of that fresco representing hell. The list is as follows:—

Virtues.	Vices.
1. Hope.	8. Folly.
2. Charity.	9. Inconstancy.
3. Faith.	10. Anger.
4. Justice.	11. Injustice.
5. Temperance.	12. Infidelity.
6. Fortitude.	13. Avarice.
7. Prudence.	14. Despair.

This list is in the order in which the frescoes are placed round the chapel, beginning on the right hand of the doorway and returning to the left of the entrance; it will be seen, therefore, that the corresponding Virtue and Vice face each other throughout the series.

Some of these allegorical figures are very beautiful; especially there should be noticed *Charity*, holding a basket of fruit in one hand and stretching forth the other to the *Almighty*, who bends down from heaven to place some fruit in her hand. As Mr. Ruskin has remarked, the figure is made to trample upon money-bags, as if in contempt. *Hope* also is a very beautiful figure flying upward with outstretched arms, and an expression of rapture and longing upon her face. After these *Justice* and *Temperance* are the finest. Of the Vices, *Injustice* is perhaps the most interesting, if it is only for the sake of giving a clear example of how far Giotto understood the nature of trees. The foreground of this fresco being a wood, behind which sits *Injustice* in a cave, with a sword in his left hand and a grappling-hook in his right, to catch the unwary traveller,

who is represented in a small predella to the picture, being robbed and stripped of his clothes. *Anger* too is a fine figure, rending her garment apart in futile wrath, and so is *Despair*, with clenched fists and downcast head. On the whole, this series of Virtues and Vices is a remarkable one for the plainness with which the thing symbolised is shown, and the penetration which has led Giotto in almost every case to the real root of the Virtue or Vice. For a full description of these most interesting frescoes the reader cannot do better than refer to the little book written for the Arundel Society by Mr. Ruskin, entitled *Giotto and his Works in Padua*.

NOTE.—"This chapel, built in, or about, the year 1303, appears to have been intended to replace one which had long existed upon the spot; and in which from the year 1278 an annual festival had been held on Ladyday, in which the Annunciation was represented in the manner of our English mysteries (and under the same title: 'Una sacra rappresentazione di quel *mistero*'), with dialogue and music, both vocal and instrumental. Scrovegni's purchase of the ground would not be allowed to interfere with the national custom; but he is reported by some writers to have rebuilt the chapel with greater costliness, in order, as far as possible, to efface the memory of his father's unhappy life. But Federici, in his history of the Cavalieri Godenti, supposes that Scrovegni was a member of that body, and was assisted by them in decorating the new edifice. The order of Cavalieri Godenti was instituted in the beginning of the thirteenth century, to defend the 'existence,' as Selvatia states it, but, more accurately, the 'dignity' of the Virgin against the various heretics by whom it was beginning to be assailed. His knights were at first called 'Cavaliers of St. Mary;' but soon increased in power and riches to such a degree that from their general habits of life they received the nickname of the 'Merry Brothers.'

"Federici gives powerful reasons for his opinion that the Arena Chapel was employed in the ceremonies of their order; and Lord Lindsay observes 'that the fulness with which the history of the Virgin is recounted on its walls, adds to the plausibility of his supposition.'

"Enrico Scrovegni was, however, towards the close of his life driven into exile, and died at Venice in 1320. But he was buried in the chapel he had built, and has one small monument in the sacristy as the founder of the building, in which he is represented under a Gothic niche, standing with his hands clasped and his eyes raised, while behind the altar is his tomb, on which, as usual at this period, is a recumbent statue of him.

JUSTICIA.

FRESCO BY GIOTTO.

IN THE CAPPELLA DELL' ARENA, PADUA.

The chapel itself may not unwarrantably be considered as one of the first efforts of Popery in resistance to the Reformation; for the Reformation, though not victorious till the sixteenth, began in reality in the thirteenth century; and the remonstrances of such bishops as our own Grossteste, the martyrdom of the Albigenses in the Dominican crusades, and the murmurs of those 'heretics,' against whose aspersions of the majesty of the Virgin this chivalrous order of the Cavalieri Godenti was instituted, were as truly the signs of the new era in religion, as the opponent work of Giotto on the walls of the Arena was a sign of the approach of a new era in art."—From *The Arena Chapel at Padua*, by JOHN RUSKIN.

CHAPTER IX.

GIOTTO'S STYLE.

"There is in truth a holy purity, an innocent *naïveté*, a child-like grace and simplicity, a freshness, a fearlessness, a yearning after all things truthful, lovely, and of good report, in the productions of this early time which invest them with a charm peculiar in its kind, and which few even of the most perfect works of the maturer era can boast of; and hence the risk and danger (which I warn you of at the outset) of becoming too passionately attached to them, of losing the power of discrimination, of admiring and imitating their defects as well as their beauties, of running into affectation in seeking after simplicity, and into exaggeration in our efforts to be in earnest; in a word of forgetting that in art, as in human nature, it is the balance, harmony and co-equal development, of sense, intellect, and spirit, which constitutes perfection."—LORD LINDSAY'S *Christian Art*.

I FEEL my inability to convey to my readers any adequate idea of the general style of Giotto's painting, and this not so much because it is a complicated one or difficult to understand, as because of its very simplicity. A few points may be mentioned in which it differed from that of his predecessors in Italy, from the pictures of the Renaissance period, and lastly from those of our own time; but when all is said, the peculiar beauty of the colouring, the simplicity and purity of the feeling, the strength and directness of the painter's aim, and the unstudied grace of his compositions will remain to baffle any description that can be given.

First let me note that previous to the time of Giotto (since

the decay at least of Greek art) colour in painting meant almost exclusively the arrangement of gorgeous hues on a golden background. The tints used being little, if at all, gradated, but laid on more in the manner of a mosaic than a modern picture. Derived, as were the traditions of painting, from manuscripts of Mount Athos and mosaics of Byzantium, they were almost wholly confined to the composition of pure colours in pleasing juxtaposition, and these colours were almost invariably full and deep. It may, perhaps, make my meaning clearer if I take an antithetical example from the art of the present day. Everybody knows the characteristics of French landscape painting, a beautiful tone of grey and black, and perhaps a few other tertiary tints, and no form or colour whatever, depending entirely on the gradation for its beauty. Well, before Giotto there was no such thing as tone, save in pure colours; and gradation of colour was practically unknown. The colours used were dark and rich, purples and crimsons and deep blues, and here and there orange and green and heavy blue-blacks. These, laid upon a gold ground, more or less ornamented with chased designs, formed the chief portion of the pictorial art of the centuries preceding Giotto. Looking into one of these pictures was like looking into a decaying fire, where amidst masses of dark shade there still burnt gloomily here and there, patches of glowing cinders and bright flame. Hung in the dim recess of a chapel or an oratory, lighted by the faint glimmer of the silver lamps, these works of Christian art may well have harmonised with the dark ages of superstition which gave them life, but they were essentially unsuitable for having any real effect upon men's minds, apart from their religious uses. They had no connection with the real life of the world, full of varying emotions and conflicting passions; they had no affinity with the times when the hardbound earth cracked at the close of

winter, and the sun shone once more in a blue sky, and all men's "pulses throbbed together with the fulness of the spring."

This was the first change that Giotto made in artistic method. "Away with the gold background," he said; "let us have the blue sky," and, as in the days of creation, "it was so." This we may fancy was the first step, but with it came many others. With the introduction of the sky came a corresponding lightening of the tones used throughout the picture, a corresponding increase in the amount of light depicted in the composition.

And, as over the whole of Byzantine art, there had brooded a gorgeous gloom, through which the tints only revealed themselves dimly and slowly, as we may see at the present day, the hues of tropic sea-weed glow faint beneath the waves of the China Sea, so over Giotto's frescoes there shone a calm, full light, not bathed in sunshine or enhanced by contrasted shade, but a plain clear breadth of day, sufficient to reveal clearly each object in the picture.

Just think what a change this one alteration in tone must have brought about! what an instrument it was for the correcting of the absurd traditions which then governed the practice of painting. It must have been like that produced by a *Times* leader upon the iniquities of local boards of guardians; namely, delight and amazement to the world at large, horror and consternation to the idiots who had done ill by stealth (though strictly in accordance with rule), and blushed to find it fame.

So keep this fact well in view, that the great change effected by Giotto was the change from rush-light to day-light, and it was only after this that further advance became possible. Do not run away with the idea that he gained thereby the whole truth; far from it. There were two centuries and a half of painters to come after him before the

whole truth of light and shade was mastered, for Giotto may be said to have practically ignored shade altogether.

Nor did he advance much further in the *gradation* of colour than his predecessors had done; his paint is generally put on in broad flat washes, with little attempt at gradation; its beauty depends chiefly upon the exquisite manner in which these washes are combined with one another. Thus he never reaches to the utmost beauty of colour, which is only obtainable with the utmost gradation of light and shade; but his work presents itself like a landscape, ere the sun rises, on a fine summer's morning, when each object lies clearly and a little coldly defined, in the shadowless air.

It must be remembered that with the attempt to master the intricacies and gradation of light and shade, came also the use of secondary and tertiary tints, to an extent unknown in the time of Giotto, who may almost be described as the last of the pure colourists, taking pure in the sense of primary. Chiaroscuro went on gradually advancing in importance, relatively to colour and subject, till in the times of Rembrandt we find it absolutely thrusting colour and subject out of the field altogether, and making the flash upon a tin pannikin, or the obscurity of a cottage kitchen, of equal importance with the grandest traditions of our race.

What is perhaps best known as the special quality of Giotto's art is his study of nature; and it is right that I should say a few words upon this somewhat indefinite phrase, and try to show in what Giotto's study of nature consisted, and wherein it differed from that of preceding painters.

If we were able to return in reality to the old times when our painter lived, I do not fancy we should find—as many good people suppose—that the folk of that day were ignorant that there were such things as domesticated animals and birds, trees and flowers, clouds and sunsets. You may be very sure that mediæval Florentines on the ridge of Fiesole, have often

paused to watch the sun gilding the spires of Florence, much as the English traveller does; and young lovers wandering idly amongst the almond-trees by the Arno, plucked the blossoms, and admired their loveliness, as we do to-day. It was only that somehow the idea had never occurred to any one that these things were suitable for pictures; there was a notion that it would be a sort of irreverence to put such vulgar details into religious scenes—arising perhaps from a similar feeling to that which makes many well-trained Christians dislike to pray for any specially desired object. Perhaps it was owing to Giotto's early training, or rather no training, in the midst of a wild mountain country, perhaps only to his rough humorous, anti-reverential character, but probably to the combination of circumstance and individuality, that made him introduce into his compositions all sorts of extraneous matter. That to the last he entertained a strong sympathy with his early shepherd life, it is impossible to doubt, and in the designs for the decoration of the base of the Campanile, only two of which he lived to execute with his own hand, there is a singularly beautiful bas-relief, illustrating the pastoral life, in which the sheep, and the puppy watching them, are as fine as anything we have from his hand.

The great difficulty of accounting for Giotto's introduction of hitherto unused matter into his pictures, lies in the fact that it does not seem to have been due especially to any partiality on his part for this or that branch of nature, as to a principle of getting to the bottom of his subject, whatever it was. He appears to have had a power of grasping the spirit of whatever scene he was engaged upon, and illustrating that appropriately, which is, as far as I know, unequalled in the records of painting. And it is noteworthy that this spirit is with him always the reverse of eclectic: no painter can be more entirely free from all principles of aristocracy; his sympathies are always with the people; the view he takes of any subject

is the plain, common-sense view, such as plain, common-sense people can understand.

Connected with this is the third great characteristic of Giotto, perhaps the strongest in his whole nature, and certainly the one which was least in accordance with the spirit of his time. This is his strong dramatic power.

This power shows itself in almost every work of the master's we have left us, and even survives his death, and lives in the work of his pupils. His pictures are not alone scenes, they are SITUATIONS, on each the curtain might fall without any sense of incongruity. Besides their appropriateness of gesture and oneness of feeling, they possess the great characteristic of dramatic art, in making the scene live before you, subduing its various incidents into one strain of meaning, yet keeping each incident complete and individual, as well as making it help the main purpose. In most of Giotto's pictures there will be found a diversity of action and expression, all of which lead up to the main action, and help to enforce and illustrate it. A minor point in which the same quality shows, is in the amount of emotion which this painter is capable of expressing by a single gesture, an amount so great that it occasionally runs some danger of lapsing into caricature. This is especially plain in such pictures as the *Betrayal* and the *Entombment*, in the Arena Chapel. But where this dramatic quality is most strongly marked is in the bas-reliefs on the base of the Campanile; in all these Giotto has succeeded, not only in choosing the most appropriate figures for illustrating his meaning, but in seizing the very moment which is most significant.

To sum up these three main characteristics of Giotto's style, they are—First, a lighter, purer tone of colour than had been in use before the time of Cimabue, and a greater variety and purity of tint than had been attained by that

master, especially in the more distant portions of the picture. Second, the introduction into his compositions of a certain amount of natural detail which had been before totally neglected, and the substitution of the portraits of actual men and women for the imaginary beings that had formerly filled up the backgrounds of the Byzantine pictures. Third, comes the power of illustrating the real meaning of his subject, and not merely suggesting it, as had formerly been the case, allied to which is the dramatic quality of which I have just spoken.

I feel how barren is all this description to explain the progress in art made by this artist — the progress from stagnation to movement, from death to life, from symbolical types, to the things themselves. It would appear unnecessary to dwell upon the few points in which his work was technically deficient, or those in which he but repeated the errors of his predecessors, but the following may just be mentioned.

The comparative dulness of the reds in use at that time, the lack of depth of hue, and variation of colour in differing aspects of light and shade; the comparative poorness of the drapery, as compared with that of the later Venetian and Florentine masters; the deficiency in the rendering of form, and the elementary amount of knowledge of perspective and anatomy—on all these points might exception be taken to his work with perfect justice, and yet when each had been given its due amount of criticism, the wonder would still be that he accomplished so much, and not so little. For two hundred years after the death of Giotto the advance in the drawing of landscape was so slight as to be almost imperceptible, and yet, compared with his landscape, that of those that preceded him was as "moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine."

I have omitted in this description the main characteristic of Giotto's style, and I have done so because it is so intangible that it can only be felt, not described. This characteristic,

hinted at by Lord Lindsay in the quotation which is placed at the head of this chapter, is the simple faith in which each of these compositions abounds; the feeling conveyed to the spectator that thus, and no otherwise, did the occurrence take place, and that the painter has not altered it a jot or tittle for his own purposes. This must be felt to be believed, and I only call attention to it here lest it should be supposed that it has failed to impress me.

CHAPTER X.

GIOTTO AT ASSISI.—THE UPPER CHURCH.

OF all the minor disadvantages of travel which have accompanied the substitution of the locomotive for the coach, perhaps none is so real an evil as the very partial impression an ordinary traveller derives from a short visit to some interesting land. When Rome and Florence, for instance, are brought within the compass of a day's journey, the tourist is little likely to care to break his journey for comparatively obscure cities, much less villages, scurries past "reedy Thrasymene" without recognition, and scarce notices the towers and churches of Perugia, rising green and grey on the mountain side. Still less likely is our tourist to arrest his comet-like progression at a rough country station, some fourteen miles from the old Etruscan city, a station where very obviously, neither guard nor porter expects him to alight, and which he has some difficulty in identifying by the help of a nearly illegible inscription, as Assisi. And yet there was a time when this forgotten town played no inconsiderable part in the world's history, and was the central seat of an Order that reckoned princes among its followers, and practically divided with the Dominicans the spiritual sovereignty of Europe.* And even now, if any very strong-minded traveller

* A small portion of this chapter appeared in the *Spectator* last year under the title of "The Shrine of Poverty," and is here reprinted by the kind permission of the editors of that paper.

should be able to defy the ominous silence of Bradshaw,* and the neglect of Cook, and more regardful of what has been, than what is, spend a few days in the home of poverty, he will not regret, we think, in after years his deviation from the accustomed routine of travel; nay, if he gain no other advantage, he will at least have had a brief space in which to take quiet breath, ere the red-books and the *valet de place* are again in requisition, ere St. Peter's becomes No. 17 in the often consulted plan, and Rome takes "at least a week to see properly." For at Assisi there is *no hurry*, and so strong is the spirit of the place that the most energetic tourist quickly succumbs to it; even those who rush over here from Perugia for a day's excursion, treading softly ere they have been a couple of hours in the city of St. Francis. And now we will suppose that "our uncommercial traveller" has safely escaped the clutches of the three or four inn touts whom his arrival has roused into unwonted energy, and consigning his bag to the least ill-favoured, has set out manfully along the dusty road leading from the station to the town; for be it noted that Assisi is not strong in equipages, and the solitary rough wooden box denominated omnibus, is hardly an attractive conveyance at first sight, though ere long the traveller begins to look upon it as an old friend, as it is to be found during the greater part of the day, standing about in various unexpected parts of the town, being apparently left wherever it has taken a passenger. One further violence we must do to the mind of the well-instructed tourist, namely, to beg that he will not accept guidance, nor torment himself with details, archæological or otherwise, but simply open his eyes to all the quiet influences of past devotion and present beauty which he will find around him. And first, he will see by the

* I may as well mention that the hotel given by Bradshaw, though the largest, is very poor in its accommodation, and the visitor would probably do better to go to the Albergo Sulasio close to the monastery.

side of the road a vast church, in the most uninteresting style of Renaissance architecture, not unlike a small edition of St. Peter's. This is St. Mary of the Angels, little notable, save for its size, and a small chapel it contains, where St. Francis first assembled his few followers. In it there is only to be seen—a spoilt fresco, by Perugino; walls dark with age, save where, here and there, the dim lamplight falls upon the silver offerings of penitence and thanksgiving; and some carved doors, more curious than beautiful. These need not delay us much from the steep ascent to the town. Another dusty mile of road, and Assisi lies before and above us, rising a confused mass of tiled roofs and massive walls, from the grey depths of the olive-groves which surround it. Not only on a mountain, but of the mountain, does the town seem to be built, the ponderous blocks of dim red and dusty yellow stone, scarcely seeming to have more the characteristics of houses than of the cliffs above, save where, here and there, a square tower of church or fortification lifts itself into clear pre-eminence of definition from the tumbled confusion of roofs, walls, and buttresses. Another turn in the long, winding road, and the great attraction of the few sightseers who visit Assisi, the Convent of St. Francis—with what Bradshaw calls its "three superb churches," which are, in fact, two—stands revealed. Picture to yourself a long mass of building, standing upon a double range of tall arches, and pierced with a multitude of small windows. This is the convent building itself; beyond it, on a level with its roof, rises the Church of St. Francis, with its square campanile. Of the same dull-yellowish colour as the other buildings of the town, there is little beauty in the church from this point of view, save that of massive strength, and a certain simplicity of design which, when carried out upon so large a scale, almost amounts to grandeur. So, leaving the convent on our left, we enter beneath a massive square

ASSISI.

From a drawing by the Author.

tower the first street of the city. It is difficult to say whence comes the sense of extreme desolation which oppresses us, not from the absence of life certainly, for at this point there are commonly a few of the villagers and townspeople chatting round an old fountain, and on every side resounds the squeaking of the pigs, that every well-to-do inhabitant of Assisi keeps tethered on the ground-floor of his house. Nor is it that there are no signs of commercial enterprise, for we notice the hammered brass and copper jars and cauldrons glimmering dimly in the recesses of one of the dark shops, and some strings of onions and other vegetables in another. Is it something, we wonder, in the construction of the town itself, in its rough-hewn blocks of dusty stone, its huge buttresses, its blocked-up arches, its weather-beaten tiles, the defacement of its ruined fountains, and the general appearance of enormous toil with which the city must have been constructed? Or is it still more the case, that even at the first glance we connect the appearance of the town with the state of the superstition to which it owes its existence; whose power changed the small Etrurian village into a shrine of the deepest sanctity and proudest priesthood, and having done its work for good and evil, faded gradually away, and now finds voice only on the trembling lips of the half-dozen monks who are all that remain at Assisi of the famous Brotherhood? For whatever reason, the place is desolate—desolate as no place can be which has not once been great; and as we ascend the street, the impression deepens. Few of the houses have glass to their windows; the old arched entrances are blocked up with rough stone, and low, square doorways supply their place; the ground-floor of the house is commonly used as a store-room, a stable, or a piggery. The upper windows show us nothing within that we are accustomed to connect with ideas of domestic comfort. Even the massive ironwork seems to partake of the general desolation, and is coated with the

grey dust of centuries. Here and there we pass a fountain, generally situated in a small grass-grown open space, with a couple of earthen pitchers left to fill themselves leisurely; and over all there is still the sense of death in life, needing a vigorous effort on our part to endure. We begin to think there was some sense in that philistine American we met at Florence, who smiled so scornfully at our determination to visit Assisi, and to have thoughts of the next train to a more lively spot. However, food and wine at the modest little hotel quickly dissipate our loneliness; our musings on St. Francis and his monks assume a more pleasant complexion, and by the time we find our way down the long street to the convent, we are in a fit mood to appreciate any beauty or pleasure which we may chance to find there. And indeed he would be hard to please who could be discontented with the enjoyment here provided, for whether it be Nature or Art for which his "thirsty soul doth pine," here he may satiate himself at leisure.

Everything on our way seems to tell the same story of departed grandeur; the city is almost as deserted as one of those we read of in the *Arabian Nights*. A beautiful arcade, each capital of whose pillars is carved to represent a different species of vegetation, incloses nothing; the house of the poet Metastasio is falling into ruins, and scarcely can one decipher his coat of arms sculptured above the door. No dogs bark, nor children scream, nor loungers stare as the unwonted stranger passes through the market-place; the very *café* has been fain to part with its chairs and little tables, and now is only a gaunt, bare room, in a corner of which sits, in half obscurity, a melancholy woman sewing slowly. The market-place is certainly the most gloomy part of the town, were it only from its contrast to the market-places we are accustomed to see; and so let us hurry down the long, grass-grown street, till at last a sudden breadth of light

opens before us, and straight in front, across a patch of green meadow, rises the Church of St. Francis, while a little to the left a steep incline leads down to the entrance of the Lower Church, called incorrectly, in some works, the crypt, as the real crypt is beneath this lower edifice. The Lower Church stands upon a shelf of rock, the side of which slopes abruptly upward, against which one end of the church is built. The position of the two churches may perhaps be understood by thinking of them as situated upon two successive steps of a staircase, the floor of the Upper Church being merely a continuation of the upper step, and being thus immediately above the roof of the Lower Church.

Let us pause before entering the church, and cast our eyes over the scene before us. We stand on a little terrace half-way up the town, looking down upon tiled roofs, grey walls, and greyer olive groves, interspersed with some brighter greens of acacia and poplar. Beneath us, winding away in long perspective, is the road to the station, with the tall dome of St. Mary of the Angels forming a prominent blot upon the landscape, and breaking the level monotony of the plain. On the right a broad river-bed, nearly dry at the present season, stretches a snake-like course towards Perugia, the towers of which are just visible in the distance. In front of us, the valley of the Tiber stretches away for miles and miles, broken only by long lines of poplars and tiny villages, which, from the height at which we stand, only show as gleaming spots in the sunshine. In the extreme distance, purple mountains enclose the valley on every side, and immediately behind us rises the mountain on which Assisi is built, crowned with a ruined citadel, and black against the sky, the sharp pinnacles of cypress-trees. Whichever way one turns, there is beauty—in the quaint architecture of the old town, in the wild growth of the ancient olive-trees, and their delicate tints of greyish-green and silver; in the brighter colours

of the plain, with its broad stretches of sunshine and little shadows of cloud; in the ranges of mountains, the darkness of the cypresses, and the brightness of the sky. And so murmuring within ourselves that the old monk was no bad judge of scenery, after all, we turn in beneath the broad portico of the church.

It is not known when this church first began to receive pictorial adornment; but it is probably true that Giunta Pisano painted there in 1236, though there can be little doubt that anterior to this period there were paintings the authorship of which is unknown, and whose date is uncertain. The whole question of the authorship of the frescoes at Assisi is discussed by Crowe and Cavalcaselle;* but it is difficult to extract their real conclusion from the mass of verbiage in which it is enveloped, and the limitations with which it is encumbered. Nor can I attach much importance to the conclusion which these authors have drawn from frescoes in such a terrible state of decay, as those in the northern and southern transepts of the Upper Church. But I do not propose to enter here upon the question of the authorship of any of these frescoes, except such as are attributed to Giotto; and even this had better be deferred till I have given my readers some idea of the general appearance of the church. Its shape is the usual Latin cross formed by a nave and transepts, without chapels or side aisles. From the entrance, which is at the *east* end of the church, to the choir, the building is divided into four portions by grouped shafts, five in number, only half of which project from the walls from the capitals; from each group spring to right and left pointed arches, in the centre of each of which is a long narrow window reaching from the ceiling to within about twenty-four feet of the ground, and from the capitals there also spring arches which cross the building diagonally, and intersect at the summit of the

* Pages 168—174 and 210—228, vol. i.

ceiling, thus forming triangular openings with curved bases, each of which is filled with a fresco, most of them greatly obliterated. The shafts and capitals have all been painted in various colours, as have also the spaces within the side arches on each side of the narrow windows above mentioned, and so have the faces and sides of each arch. The four main portions, into which the ceiling is thus divided, are alternately painted blue with golden stars, or filled with medallions and figure subjects. The painting of the arches is in imitation of marble mosaic. The intersecting arches of the roof are round (as in the Lower Church), not pointed like the side arches, and on the sides of the latter, which are double in width of the centre arches, there are busts of various saints and martyrs of the church connected by rich ornament and involved geometrical design. On either side of the windows, in the second row from the roof, are the frescoes ascribed to Cimabue, all of which are considerably defaced; above these are the ones assigned by Vasari and Lord Lindsay to Giunta Pisano. The roof was, while I was there, in process of utter destruction (by restoration), and its ruin is by this time probably completed.

Underneath the windows there is a third row of paintings, thirty-six in number, commonly supposed to be the work of Giotto, and beneath this again painted bands of mosaic, and so to the floor, which is alternately inlaid with squares and octagons of marble originally red and white, but which has worn into the warm dusty yellow which seems to overspread the whole of Assisi.

The choir is built and decorated in a similar manner, and its centre occupied by a very elaborately worked iron screen (once bronzed and gilt) erected upon a marble daïs, inlaid with glass mosaic, the patterns of each step being different, but all intricate and beautiful. The daïs is about ten feet high and thirty-eight feet long, and the screen about nine

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feet high. Surmounting the screen there is a narrow marble canopy, supported upon twelve marble pillars, with capitals of acanthus leaves richly gilt, the convex side of the leaves in the upper portion of each capital being very deeply cut and painted vermilion. The screen surrounds a plain marble altar.

The arrangement of the choir is similar to that of the body of the church, each of the transepts being similar in size and arrangement to one of the four divisions already spoken of; the only difference is in the size of the windows, which are exactly double of those in the nave, though of identical shape, each having one pointed archivault; but at the choir end of the church the window is treble in size. The two sides of the choir which have no windows, are ornamented with small galleries of tre-foiled Gothic arches supporting canopies. Underneath these galleries are a row of paintings corresponding with the lowest row of frescoes in the nave. There is a recess of about two feet running the whole length of the church between the groups of shafts just above the lowest row of frescoes, which serves to measure the depth of the side arches, and also as a domain to the two lower rows of frescoes. The colour on the shafts, and on the lowest portion of the side walls, has almost entirely disappeared, and the whole of the paintings in the church are much injured by damp. So much is this the case, that it makes me doubt whether it is worth while going very deeply into the question of their authorship, though this is a favourite battleground with the biographers of early Italian painters.

Vasari boldly ascribes the whole upper portion of the church to Cimabue, and the lower to Giotto: Lindsay asserts that Giunta Pisano had painted the upper, Cimabue the middle, and Giotto the lower range of compartments: Kugler, though somewhat indefinite, holds that he worked out his apprenticeship in the Upper Church of Assisi, and afterwards came again and laboured in the Lower one.

To sum up then the discussion of this matter, which is hardly an interesting one to the general reader, my explanation of the probable authorship of the lower row of frescoes would be the following. That they have been painted by a pupil of Giotto's at the same time that the master himself was at work on the frescoes in the Lower Church, and that the only frescoes by Giotto in the Upper Church, are the two almost monochrome compositions that are placed one on each side of the principal entrance. It should be noted that these two are far more conspicuous, owing to their isolated position, than any other frescoes in the church, which may well have been the reason for their execution by the master himself. And it is somewhat curious to observe that they are both painted in little more than two shades of colour, and are the only frescoes in the church so painted, as if Giotto were purposely restraining his hand, so as not to spoil by contrast the cruder work of his pupil. This pupil I believe to have been Taddeo Gaddi; but I have not seen sufficient undoubted works by his hand, to render this more than a mere conjecture, and there is no evidence on the subject whatever, save such as may be inferred from the fact that Gaddi was almost certainly present with Giotto at the time he painted in the Lower Church.

Leaving the question of the actual authorship undecided just now, notice how far this hypothesis, besides having strong internal evidence in its favour, goes to solve the difficulties of this matter; by it we account easily and naturally for the Giottesque qualities which we find in these works, and also for their comparative feeble significance. And by the effort to combine the Byzantine manner of Cimabue with the simplicity of Giotto, we account for all the very inferior architecture with which these pictures are crowded: architecture which is to a certain extent Giottesque in form, but seems to be wholly conventional in colouring and arrangement.

Giotto would naturally say to his pupil something of this sort: "Look here, Gaddi, this a great chance for you to distinguish yourself; mind you make the most of it. Don't forget that what you have to do is to complete Cimabue's work; you must not make his compositions look more absurd and unnatural than you can help; above all, your work must be in keeping with his in colour, or you'll spoil the church. Mind you preserve the character of the architecture, and keep it uniform throughout; and if you let your work be a little conventional, it will be all the better."

So we may imagine Giotto talking to his pupil; and the compositions are exactly such as might have been produced after such an exhortation, by an earnest, but not very brilliant pupil, in attempting to combine as much as possible of the character of Giotto's work, with the form of Cimabue's compositions.

Indeed, these frescoes frequently fall between the two stools of naturalism and conventionalism, and have the merits of neither. The architecture is throughout utterly absurd, worse, because not so refined as that of the Byzantine, and quite without the beauty of Giotto; an effort towards the simplicity of the buildings in the frescoes of the Arena Chapel being nevertheless observable, though it results only in a toy-shop architecture of the lowest order, yellow and blue towers being stuck one against another.

The figures, too, show the attempt to depict emotion, but without success; and lastly, the colouring, as at present seen, is crude, to the verge of discordancy; but upon this last it would be unsafe to lay much stress, as it is impossible to say what deterioration may not have resulted from the damp, which in some places has actually obliterated the composition altogether. This execution by a pupil would also account for Giotto having restricted himself to shades of grey, green, and blue in the two frescoes at the end of the chapel to which

I have above referred. The subjects of these are *St. Francis preaching to the Birds*, and *St. Francis' Dream;* and amongst all the Giottos I have seen, there is no more harmonious piece of colouring than in the last named of these works.*

There is one piece of corroborative evidence in favour of these works being by Taddeo Gaddi that I may quote for what it is worth, which is, that in the series of panels in the Gallery at Berlin which formerly were part of the frescoes in the Santa Croce of Florence, and which are certainly, according to Crowe and Cavalcaselle, the work of Gaddi; "the subjects are, in fact, more or less repetitions of those in the Upper Church of Assisi." Now it seems more probable that Gaddi should have repeated his own compositions than that he should have repeated those of some unknown master, especially one of such comparatively feeble powers.

Here I must leave the consideration of the authorship of these frescoes; as I said in the beginning, it is a much vexed question, and one that there is at present no positive evidence for deciding; the one thing that is certain is that in a very short time, if it has not happened already, the frescoes will, to all intents and purposes, have entirely vanished.

Crowe and Cavalcaselle hold that there were a series of painters who worked at the Upper Church, and that the whole history of the revival of early Italian art is comprised and explained in these paintings, and seem to hold that Giotto painted only one or two of these frescoes; while, lastly, in one of Dr. Dohme's German series of biographies, which is the latest work issued on this subject, we have the author maintaining the thesis that Giotto painted all these frescoes (in the lower row), and that when he had finished this series he began again upon those of the Lower Church.

* In Appendix C, at the end of this book, will be found a list of the works attributed to Giotto by Lord Lindsay, Crowe and Cavalcaselle, Ruskin, and Dohme.

Of the various opinions, those of Vasari and Lindsay can, I think, be shown to be wrong from a comparison of the dates of Giotto's works. In the first place there is no evidence whatever to hint at two visits to Assisi, except Vasari's statement that Giotto was invited to Assisi by Fra Mure. Now Fra Mure, who was general of the Franciscan order, only held that post between 1296 and 1302, and therefore if he invited Giotto to complete the frescoes of the Upper Church, it must have been between those years; but from a register preserved in the Vatican, the famous *Navicella* mosaic was executed by Giotto in 1298, and that he was still at Rome in 1300, is proved by a portion of a fresco representing Pope Boniface announcing the opening of the Jubilee, which took place 1300, and upon the completion of which work Giotto betook himself to Florence, and painted the famous frescoes in the Bargello, in one of which the portrait of Dante occurs. Dante was exiled in 1302, and this, and many minor considerations, point to the date 1301-2 for the execution of these frescoes. It is therefore easy to see that Giotto could not have had the possibility of accepting Fra Mure's invitation between the dates of 1296 and 1302. The question remains whether the lower row of frescoes were executed by Giotto at any subsequent period?

Now there is a consensus of testimony that in Florence, in the year 1303, Giotto executed the designs for the façade of the Duomo, afterwards carried out by Andrea Pisano; and that in the same year he married. What happened during the next two years is matter of conjecture: Vasari states that he proceeded to Avignon, which is contradicted by Crowe and Cavalcaselle on the authority of Abertini; and we can find nothing certain till we discover our painter at Padua between 1305-6 painting in the Chapel of the Arena.

If the frescoes in the Upper Church be compared at all

carefully with those of the Arena Chapel, it is at once evident that if they be the work of the same hand, it must have worked in a far earlier stage of progress, and it is equally evident, that the transition from the frescoes of the Upper Church to those of the Lower, is marked by an abrupt interval of time.

It is impossible that Giotto could have so far fallen away in skill as to execute the frescoes in the Upper Church subsequent to his painting of the Arena Chapel at Padua; and it is nearly impossible from the dates of his work that he could have found time to do them before. The only hypothesis that seems to be left, if we wish to believe that Giotto executed this series in the upper church, is that Giotto accompanied Cimabue when he worked at Assisi, and painted the lower row of frescoes under the direction of his master.

This theory does not seem to me likely for many reasons; first, it would have been most probable that had Giotto and Cimabue visited Assisi together, some evidence of such a visit would have been discovered; secondly, it seems improbable that Cimabue would have allowed his apprentice such license in composition and incident as is here shown; and thirdly, the manner of the pictures is not as was Giotto's early manner, semi-Byzantine, but rather errs in the opposite direction, and seems a coarse imitation of Giotto's natural method of depicting events. It will be noticed, in careful examination of these works, that, as far as can be judged from the damaged state in which they at present exist, the composition, and what artists call motive, of the pictures are, as a rule, very superior to their execution, which is blundering and unmasterly. I am led by this, and other considerations of style and time, to come to the conclusion that these works are not from the hand of Giotto himself, but were probably executed by his pupils, while the master himself was painting in the Lower Church. The likelihood of this hypothesis will be

greater if we remember that there are in the Castellani Chapel of Santa Croce, frescoes which are undoubtedly by the hand of Agnolo Gaddi, which betray many of the so-called Giottesque traits that we find in these frescoes; and indeed the wonder would rather be demanded if this were not the case, and if the inaugurator of a new style of painting did not have his merits imitated by the students working under his tuition.

Again, it seems to be a gratuitous assumption on the part of Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle to hold that this lower row of scenes from the life of St. Francis must be the work of successive artists merely because they exhibit differences of merit. We should rather expect that the same workman, or workmen, would improve in the course of so long a series, especially if they were painted more or less under the direction of a master like Giotto. In any case, a comparison of dates renders it excessively improbable that Giotto paid two visits to Assisi, and if this be so, we are, I think, justified in concluding that the utmost connection he had with the frescoes of the Upper Church was through the medium of his pupils.

Whether or no Crowe and Cavalcaselle are right in believing that other painters besides Giunta and Cimabue had a hand in the upper rows of frescoes, and, if so, who those painters were, are questions which are just now beyond our subject; and very soon they will be beyond any one's interest or power to answer, for the last traces of colour yet remaining in these works are rapidly fading away. It is, however, impossible to imagine with Vasari that all these upper rows of pictures were executed by one hand, for the very strongest differences in style, composition, and even (traces of) colour exists between them.

Thus in the fresco of the *Creation*, there is not the slightest approach to naturalism of treatment; the Almighty stands

within a circle of vermilion and gold surrounded by a halo, which is apparently intended to represent the sun; beneath him is the moon, with a man's face in it, so that there should be no mistaking what it was intended for; beneath the moon, floating in the air in a lozenge-shaped patch of red, is Adam, while beneath him again are some sheep, and an animal that may be either ox, dog, or fox, for it partakes of the character of all three; and to the right of the picture is the sea, with several gigantic fishes half in, half out of the water. The only other fresco in this compartment which is yet decipherable, represents the building of the ark, and is of like character. Compare, however, with these the picture in the next compartment eastwards, representing the sacrifice of Isaac. Large portions of the left-hand side of this work are destroyed, but sufficient are left to show an attempt, rough, it is true, but quite unmistakable, to represent a mountain landscape, with a temple in the distance. Turn to the right hand of the picture: Isaac is half sitting, half lying on the sacrificial altar, and Abraham stands beside him with one hand upon the child's head, his left foot firmly planted on the step of the altar, and his right arm swung up to its fullest height above his head. Seldom have I seen a more vivid bit of arrested motion depicted in any work of art; the painter has actually caught the pause caused by the sudden appearance of the angel, bidding the father to stay his hand. The action of all the limbs is most remarkable in its intensity, even Abraham's long robes fly out wildly behind his outstretched arm. It is impossible that these two pictures can belong to the same hand, or even to the same school—the first is entirely Byzantine in manner, and might have been copied from a fifth century MS.; the latter lacks nothing but a certain amount of fuller detail and a little more anatomical knowledge, to stand as a faithful representation of the event it depicts.

We now come to the question of whether this fresco be one of the works of Giotto, and again must answer it in the negative. In none of the undoubted works by this master is there so advanced a naturalism as here, especially in the treatment of the drapery, which is far nearer to that of the Renaissance period than that of the Byzantine. It will be found on a careful examination of the works in the Arena Chapel at Padua, that the *main* lines of the drapery are either straight (or very slightly curved), and in some measure stiff; it would have been almost folly to expect that this should be otherwise, remembering that anterior to Giotto the treatment of drapery had been exclusively founded upon the formal parallel lines of the Byzantine mosaics.

In all probability the Renaissance painters have here supplied the place of a vacant or faded fresco with one of their own compositions, and this is rendered the more likely as there are in the Lower Churches several wretchedly bad Renaissance pictures.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOWER CHURCH OF ASSISI.

AT first sight the church seems of small extent, as the entrance is in a transept at the north side, and the eye looks across the nave without perceiving it; but a few steps forward, and an abrupt turn to the left, brings the church before us—a vast dim cave, glowing with rich colour and subdued light. Looking up the nave, the building appears to be lighted only by the narrow windows in the thick wall of the apse, save where here and there a dull gleam from one of the side chapels steals across, but hardly lightens, the gloom.

Nor is it alone in shape of roof and dimness of light that the resemblance to a cavern exists, for it is visible too in the low walls, whence the arched roof springs in massive curves, and in the seeming absence of all support for the great arches, for the plain stone pillars that support them, half embedded in the walls, and only reaching to a height of eight feet from the ground, attract little notice, and the arches seem to grow out of the walls as if in a building of nature's own construction.

The division of the church, and the arrangement of the arches, is the same as in the Upper Church; but everything which is there arranged so as to give appearance of lightness and unsubstantiality, is here made as ponderous in appearance

as possible. The two churches might stand for embodiments of light and shade, of graceful symmetry and rock-hewn strength. And it is easy to see that this is no chance contrast caused by the circumstances of the case, for where the windows give upon the church, they are deep sunken in arched recesses, while the large windows in the side chapel are more than half veiled by the arched entrances to the chapels, which last form almost a separate row of chambers, so wholly are they cut off from the nave. Half way up the nave a massive iron grating divides the church, and further on, beneath the centre of the great arches that form the body of the choir, the high altar stands upon a daïs of four steps, its only decoration being six massive candlesticks, whose huge lights reach almost to the roof. The apse is the usual semi-circle, pierced with narrow arched windows, and within its shadow, are the desks and pulpits where sit all that are left of the Franciscan Brethren. We will not attempt to describe more than its general effect, and indeed that is best done by simply saying that it closely resembles that of St. Mark, at Venice. In detail, there is hardly the least similarity; but in depth of light and shade, in profusion of rich colour gleaming on every hand, in the general effect of its round arches, mosaic pavement, and glimmering lamps, the similarity is striking. If the lover of nature found the prospect without to his mind, the lover of art can hardly fail to be satisfied with the prospect within. Above the high-altar shine the four greatest works of Giotto, and to right and left of the choir, roof and wall are covered with frescoes by Giotto, Cimabue, Memmi, Gaddi, and others, every inch of space being filled with paintings. Chapel after chapel opens in long series from the choir, each rich in paintings, even the huge round arches of the nave are painted in delicately-involved patterns to represent mosaics of coloured marble. Here our traveller may well rest in silent wonder, that so much beauty remains unvisited,

for unvisited it is by nine out of every ten tourists who pass by the gates of Assisi. There is, perhaps—we will even say probably—no building within the limits of the civilised world in which so much colour-beauty is concentrated as in that of the Lower Church. For six hundred years have these walls glowed like jewels through the "dim, religious light," and the setting sun has lighted up with still greater glory the golden halos of their pictured saints; for six hundred years have prayer and praise rung along these massive arches and echoed up the mountain-side; and now prayer and picture are fading alike; the most damaged fresco on the walls is hardly so maimed as the rite it witnesses, the vilest restoration no greater parody on the original than are those few poor monks parodies of their ancient Order. It is, we think, impossible for any one with a heart which is not entirely dead to all human sympathies not to be somewhat moved at this combination of fading art and faded faith, but it is a feeling the power of which we can hardly hope to explain to our readers, apart from the influences which produced it. The *religio loci* is, of all other influences, the one which is least capable of deliberate analysis, and the combination between colour-beauty and a peculiar solemnity of feeling, one of which many people even deny the existence.

It is worth noticing that though the whole effect of the church is, as I have said, excessively similar to that of St. Mark's at Venice, especially in the richness of subdued colouring, the effect which is produced in St. Mark's by elaborate Byzantine mosaics, and the lavish use of gold and precious marbles, is here gained only by the lovely colouring of the frescoes, which cover every available space, and even are continued on the arches themselves, which are painted in elaborate imitations of marble mosaic. The richness of hue of these painted mosaics is very great, and the patterns frequently of great delicacy and beauty. On the first arch, for

instance, there is a running border of vine leaves drawn with a freedom and truth which is remarkable, if we compare it with the representation of natural foliage in the frescoes.* Most of the patterns, however, both on the arches and the borders surrounding the pictures are more or less geometrical, and are interspersed with medallions of the heads of various prophets and saints of the Church.

The most westerly portion of the building, including the entrance, is destroyed by bad Renaissance work of the most vulgar type, and any one who wishes to see the two styles (pre- and post-Raphael) most strongly contrasted in favour of the former, could hardly have a better opportunity than is given by the series of frescoes (representing the Popes) in this part of the church.

Let us next look in detail at the arrangement of the frescoes.

It is in the four triangular spaces of the roof immediately above the altar, that the four great Giotto frescoes, illustrating the three vows of the Order of St. Francis—*Obedience*, *Chastity*, *Poverty*, and one of the *Enthronement of St. Francis in Heaven*, are seen.

In the right-hand transept of the choir there are a series of designs by Gaddi, Memmi, Cimabue, and Giotto, of various New Testament subjects, the most prominent of which is a magnificent *Enthronement of the Virgin*, by Cimabue, underneath which Giotto has painted St. Francis and four brethren of his order, who gaze at the Madonna with reverent ecstasy.

The most interesting portion of the church is undoubtedly the choir, though, owing to the narrow arched windows and the altar being placed at the west instead of the east end, it is only towards sundown that there is sufficient light to thoroughly illuminate the frescoes on the roof.

* It would, however, be unsafe to found any conclusion on the naturalism found here, as it is certain that painters of many later periods worked in this lower church.

First let me give a description of these four works, and then examine the question of the authorship of the other frescoes in the choir which are attributed to Giotto.

The Frescoes above the High Altar in the Lower Church of Assisi.—The subjects chosen for illustration typify, as might be expected, the vows and the reward of the Franciscan brotherhood; the four frescoes representing—first, the *Vow of Poverty;* second, that of *Chastity;* third, *Obedience;* and fourth, the *Enthronement of St. Francis in Heaven.* The first three of these subjects are all treated in the manner of allegories, the interpretation of which is sufficiently obvious.

The first and last frescoes represent St. Francis himself as the protagonist of the allegory, the second and third only introduce him incidentally. Thus, in the first fresco, the subject is *St. Francis wedded to Poverty*, typifying the course which must be followed by all disciples of the order. The chief features of this composition are as follows:—Towards the centre of the fresco, slighly to the left-hand side, are the three chief actors in the scene—Christ, St. Francis, and Poverty, the saint in the dress of his order, his bride in a thin short robe with naked feet; around the group stand the angels in whose presence the marriage is being solemnised. On the left hand of the composition, in the foreground of the picture, a beggar appeals to a young man for alms, in answer to which the youth is taking off his cloak, while his guardian angel pats him on the shoulder approvingly, and points to the marriage ceremony as if to confirm his charitable intention. On the right hand of the picture two figures, with money-bags clutched firmly in their hands, seem to resist the pleading of an angel, who points to St. Francis, and apparently urges them to follow his example. The centre of the foreground is occupied by two figures of children, one of whom, with garments held tightly round him, is throwing stones at Poverty, whilst the other is pointing at her

scornfully with a long stick. The figure of Poverty herself, which is the central one of the fresco, has at her feet a barking dog and a thicket of brambles, the thorns of which have torn rents in her robe, but in the background a flowering rose-tree seems to symbolise the advantages which the saint promises to her followers. The upper part of the composition represents one angel bearing a model of the church up to heaven, and another carrying the cloak which the young man on the left has given to the beggar, to receive both of which gifts the Almighty bends down from the clouds.*

There is in this fresco a praise of poverty which is by no means in accordance with the ideas which the painter himself entertained, and must have been a very perfunctory performance on his part; for, curiously enough, there is in existence a canzone on the subject of poverty by Giotto, in which he clearly states his opinion of it as a very dangerous thing, and one that tended towards vice rather than led to its abstention. This canzone may be found in Vasari.†

The Vow of Chastity.—This fresco also falls into three chief divisions, as follows:—The left-hand group is composed of eight figures, of whom three are aspirants who wish to join the Franciscan brotherhood. One of these is being welcomed by St. Francis himself, while another, a nun, is presented with a cross by one of the attendant female figures, possibly intended to typify Sta. Chiara; behind these are two more figures of saints. A soldier, with a shield in one hand and a scourge in the other, stands by the side of St. Francis, and indicates the struggle and the means of victory which those who desire to excel in chastity must endure—the rocky ground upon which the group stands showing the difficulty

* According to Crowe and Cavalcaselle, the original drawing for this fresco is in the possession of H.R.H. the Duc d'Aumale. It is a pen drawing on vellum.

† Vasari, vol. i. p. 348.

of the first approach. The centre of the foreground is occupied by a group which has in its midst a naked figure in a font being baptised by angels, behind whom stand two attendant angels with the garments of the novice, and two soldiers, holding scourges, seem to wait for the ceremony to be completed. The third group, in the foreground, symbolises the victory of the angels and monks over the evil desires of the flesh, and consists of several figures, the chief of which is a monk, with wings already sprouting out of his brown robe and a halo round his cowled head, who is driving away with his trident a figure symbolical of love—love as understood by the priests—half cupid, half devil. A winged beast, something between horse and pig, has been already vanquished by the same stout monk, and is falling backwards into an abyss of flame; a third figure beyond, also symbolical of lust, is having his arm seized by a winged skeleton, who plants his foot firmly upon the figure's thigh and apparently intends to kick him into the flames below. The background of the picture is filled with the fortress in which Chastity sits securely guarded behind double walls, to whom angels are bearing the crown and palm of heavenly victory. Beneath her seat two angels offer her banner and shield to the novice below.

These are undoubtedly the two finest of the allegorical series, being both more varied in composition and incident and finer in individual figures than the frescoes of *Obedience* and *St. Francis in Glory*, both of which are a little formal in their arrangement.

In the *Obedience* the action takes place within a shrine, divided into three compartments, to the right and left hand of which large groups of ministering angels are kneeling. This shrine symbolises the Monastery of St. Francis, or the house of all those who join his brotherhood. In its left-hand compartment, which is presided over by a double-faced figure with mirror and shield labelled Prudence, a saint with a

halo exhorts two monks, who seem to wait their turn to take the required vow. In the centre, Obedience, a winged female figure in a man's robe, imposes the yoke of obedience upon a kneeling figure, laying at the same time her finger upon her lips. On the right hand are three figures—a kneeling saint, Humility holding a torch in her hand, and a centaur, who, with arm upraised, is witnessing the vow taken by the monk with despair, and whose advance seems checked by a reflection cast upon him from the mirror of Prudence.

The fourth fresco—*St. Francis enthroned in Heaven*—represents the saint sitting in a shrine, a sceptre in one hand, and a breviary in the other, above him a legend to the effect that this is his reward, and around groups of angels bearing lilies and palms, trumpets and harps. Of all the four frescoes, this is the least interesting, St. Francis himself in his heavy robe, covered with gold embroidery, being almost comically stiff and unnatural.

Having spoken very briefly of the main incidents of these four great frescoes, I must say a few words upon their special characteristics. They are in my opinion the greatest works which Giotto has left to us, though a good deal of the *naïf* grace and freshness of the artist's early work has disappeared.

Though single figures in the Santa Croce frescoes may perhaps be favourably compared with any in these Assisi compositions, yet for scope of imagination and variety of detail, they stand easily pre-eminent, and owing to their fortunate position beneath the floor of the Upper Church, they have been almost entirely preserved from the effects of damp, which has ruined nearly all Giotto's later works in Florence. There is to be seen in these symbolical paintings the fulfilment of all that was promised in the work of the Arena Chapel; accompanied by a more daring ambition, and a far higher power of realising the conceptions of the artist. The key of

colour is the same—pure and delicate; perhaps, as compared with later artists, a trifle faint; but it is here much more extended, and there is much more variety in the individual tints. Gradation, that great secret of beautiful colour, is more diligently sought for; tints are more broken up, more numerous, and more skilfully combined, and the effect of the fresco, as a whole, is infinitely richer. Similar advance is noticeable in the composition, which is studied with an elaboration suitable to the masses of figures introduced into each work, and which though occasionally a little formal, is in the highest degree excellent, if it be contrasted with that which was prevalent before and contemporary with our Painter.

Other merits there are, such as might have been expected in an older artist, of which the chief are a fuller knowledge of form, and a greater attention to its details, to which must certainly be added an increase in the richness and disposition of the folds of the drapery, and a little concession to the claims of elegance in the arrangement of the attitudes and robes. The old grace is still there, but it is hardly as unconscious as of old; it owes less to feeling, and more to skill; it is more wonderful, but hardly so charming. These frescoes are, we may say in conclusion, by far the most important uninjured works which remain to us from Giotto's hand, and fortunately they seem from their position to stand a good chance of preservation. Neither dust nor damp can well affect them; the little light that suffices to illumine the poor ritual of Assisi, will take many a year to darken the tints of these pictures above the altar; and the old church above them will have crumbled into ruin before any accident can disturb the massive arches on whose interstices Giotto has painted these pictures. The only other fresco of Giotto's maturity which I have heard of as being of nearly equal importance with these, is one in the shop of Francesco

Pittipaldi, at Naples, which was originally a part of the convent of Sta Chiara. This fresco (which I have not seen) is quoted by Crowe and Cavalcaselle as being one of those beautiful compositions by Giotto which "are his grand claim to the admiration of the world." It represents the miracles of the loaves and fishes, and is symbolical of the almsgiving of the Franciscans.

I may here mention the other later works of this painter, which circumstances have prevented me from examining, and of which therefore I have given no description. These are:—1st. Works in the Brera Gallery at Milan, and in the Pinacoteca of Bologna—originally parts of an altar-piece for the church of St. Maria degli Angeli at Bologna. 2nd. *St. Francis receiving the Stigmata*, now in the Louvre, formerly belonging to the convent of St. Francesco at Pisa. 3rd. An *Entombment of the Virgin*, belonging to a Mr. Martin. These works are given as Giotto's on the authority of Crowe and Cavalcaselle.

We may observe generally with regard to the pictures in the north transept, that they are in every way more elaborate than those of the Arena at Padua, the drapery especially being more varied in its folds and colours. Another very characteristic difference in these later pictures is the greater preponderance of the architectural element in the designs. In the Arena Chapel what little architecture is introduced, is simple in form and excessively plain in colour, serving for little more than a bare indication of the meaning of the composition, and being in no wise an important portion of the picture. But at Assisi, in six at least out of the nine pictures attributed to Giotto in the northern transept, architecture has a very important place assigned to it, and it is noticeable that the architectural portions of the composition are decorated with mosaic borders in some way corresponding to those used in the decoration of the actual church. The

attempt seems to have been at Assisi to glorify the building of the church, and to render the pictures subordinate to the architectural unity of decoration, whereas in the Arena Chapel the attempt was evidently to obliterate the building through the beauty of the pictures, or rather to make the spectator forget the plain shell which inclosed the frescoes in tracing the story which their compositions pictured. The figures, too, in these Assisi frescoes are comparatively small, and possess but slight individual interest; here and there we see attempts at animation of gesture, but they are comparatively slight, and the chief interest of the frescoes depends upon the grace of the composition, and the richness of the colouring used.

The colouring, too, is perceptibly different from that of the Arena Chapel, where, though very delicate, it is simple in the extreme, while in many of these pictures, the hues used are deep and rich in general effect, but have lost much of the fresh purity which formerly distinguished them.

At the Arena Chapel the picture stood out at a glance, every superfluous detail giving instant place to the main spirit of the scene; here the treatment is much more elaborate, but a considerable portion of the earnestness and oneness of the Arena frescoes is gone; the work, though beautiful, is not striking, not that it is exactly confused, but seems rather to be that of a conscientious workman carrying out directions faithfully, with a little painful effort.

Of course this alteration in architecture and colour was caused to some considerable extent by the necessity of the work being in harmony with the very elaborate decoration of the church, and by the fact of the construction of the building being far more intricate and elaborate than the plain oblong box of the Arena Chapel. The simple magnificence of tint which makes each fresco in the latter building tell as if it were of a perfect jewel, and the breadth of composition

and treatment, owing to which the picture denotes as forcibly as possible the fact depicted, would perhaps have been out of harmony if adopted here; but there can be little doubt which treatment is the most admirable in itself or most like that of Giotto's usual style.

However this may be, there is another and a simpler reason for the differences we have noted, which is, that in all probability the only frescoes executed by Giotto's own hand were those in the four triangular spaces above the choir, and two others presently to be mentioned; the majority of the works attributed to him were probably executed by Taddeo Gaddi and Simon Memmi, under his superintendence. This would render it probable that greater elaboration should be bestowed upon the more mechanical portions of the composition which could be executed almost equally well by the pupil, and would likewise account for the pictures being treated more from the point of view of portions of the building, and the figures being kept subordinate, as it will of course account for the work being both more varied in colouring, and also for its having less of the master's delicate beauty.

It must be noted that the scale of colouring in the *Vows of St. Francis* is a much more extended one than the painter was possessed of at the time of his decoration of the Arena Chapel, and this alone should have made Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle hesitate before attributing these works to an earlier period.* Very certainly growth in years and genius would be likely to increase the richness and variety of his tints, and no doubt most of these north transept frescoes were executed by his pupils, and only had the final touches laid on

* It is in no spirit of carping criticism that I must here express my inability to discover clearly when Crowe and Cavalcaselle do intend to make Giotto visit Assisi. I have found so much difficulty in finding any definite statements throughout their work that I have almost ceased to expect them. I *believe* they mean that the Assisi frescoes were previously executed to those of Padua.

by the master. The most noticeable quality in these frescoes, compared with the undoubted work of Giotto, both in the Arena Chapel and the frescoes in the ceiling of Assisi, is the lack of that life in every line which was so excellent a merit in Giotto's work. In the frescoes of Padua every line is perfectly unfaltering and necessary, and endowed with a force and deliberate intention to which it is difficult to find a parallel in the history of art. "No man," says Mr. Ruskin, somewhere, "has expressed so much action in a single gesture as Giotto has done." Of this vivid expression the frescoes in the north transept appear to me to retain few traces; they have just the same relation to the early work that a clever imaginary landscape has to a rough sketch from nature. The first may not be *wrong*, but we feel that the latter is right.

A good deal of the difference is no doubt also due to the fact of the influence of Cimabue, who had painted here before Giotto's time, and something perhaps to the *genius loci;* the darkened air, the fragrant incense, the mixed influences of priestcraft and superstition, that fill the place.

A painter is but a man after all, and *qud* painter he is necessarily a more susceptible man than the rest—an instrument prone to echo to various influences. No doubt there must have been a far different spirit in this half-lighted cave to that which dwelt in the fair open hall of the Arena; as different as the somewhat barren mountain, on which the convent stands, was from the bee-haunted, flowery inclosure in which stands Scavegni's chapel.

Some or all of these various reasons may serve to explain the difference in feeling between these works and those executed by Giotto both in earlier and later times, especially the excessive use of gold and lustrous richness; and some of the lifeless expressions of the figures may probably be attributed to the influences of monastic discipline and want of fresh air and sunlight.

The pictures in the north transept, attributed to Giotto by Professor Dobbert (the latest writer on this subject, and, as far as critical opinion goes, little more than an echo of Crowe and Cavalcaselle) are as follows:—1. *The Visitation;* 2. *The Adoration of the Shepherds;* 3. *The Magi;* 4. *The Presentation in the Temple;* 5. *The Flight into Egypt;* 6. *The Massacre of the Innocents;* 7. *The Return of the Family;* 8. *The Crucifixion.*

The Salutation (or *Visitation*).—This composition is in its main figures a repetition of the one in the Arena chapel. There are, however, more people introduced; the background is altered, the figures are slighter and stiffer, the lines of the drapery less flowing, and with less action in them. The faces are thinner and larger, and the figures are smaller in proportion to the size of the picture.

The Nativity.—This composition is altogether inferior in interest and dramatic power to that in the Arena. The natural action of the Virgin, as she half turns on her bed to place the Child in the nurse's arms, is changed to a stiff sitting posture; the angels are arranged in four groups, instead of flying hither and thither as in the Arena picture. Indeed the picture is wholly symmetrical in its arrangements, Joseph being in one corner, the shepherds and their flocks in another; the two attendants and the Child in the centre. Above these come again the Virgin and Child, with a row of angels hovering on each side; and above these again the roof of the shed, with two more groups of angels; down the centre of the picture a glory streams upon the Infant Christ. It may be noticed that the Virgin's face in this and the other pictures in this transept is much more of the Greek type than that used by Giotto at Padua. The only real Giottesque traits in this composition are, first, the natural actions and expressions of the two attendants engaged in purifying the Child; and, second, the actions of the ox and the ass, who poke their

heads across the manger with the patient stupidity, and wonder-what-it's-all-about, look of nature.

The Adoration of the Magi.—In this and the following fresco of the *Presentation in the Temple* we find perhaps the strongest proof of these works being more probably imitations of Giotto's manner than original works. I cannot conceive how it is possible for any artist (or indeed any one with an eye for a picture at all) to imagine that these stiff, formal draperies, falling in folds, which seem as if each had a leaden weight attached to it, so straight and stiff are they, and those inexpressive faces, chiefly of the aquiline type, could have proceeded from the same hand as the frescoes of *Obedience* and *Poverty*.

Standing, as I did, here on the steps of the high altar, by the side of the one fresco, and beneath the others, it appeared inconceivable that a question should ever have been raised as to the authorship of the frescoes of the north transept, or at least as to their being by Giotto's own hand. The misleading fact has, I suppose, been the reproduction of so many of the master's figures and attitudes in these frescoes; but, rightly understood, this should rather have created the contrary presumption, for it is far more likely that a pupil should repeat his master's figures, than that a man of such inventive genius as Giotto undoubtedly was at a later time, should deliberately set himself to copy his earlier work, as he must have done if these pictures were by him.

But apart from all such *à priori* considerations, the difference in the work and the style is so great as to put the matter beyond a question. There is not to be found in any of the hundreds of figures in the four large compositions in the ceiling of this church, one in which the faces are of the same type, the figures of the same long, lean kind, and the drapery of the straight, angular nature that we find in these two

frescoes of the *Adoration* and the *Presentation*. The same thing applies to the *Flight into Egypt*, though in this composition there is a greater approach in some respects to the master's manner. It is worthy of notice that the various trees and ferns in this picture are painted without the dark background employed by Giotto in his Arena pictures; each leaf is now painted dark against the background, instead of light on a background of a dark patch, the rough outside shape of the tree. This is no inconsiderable advance, and a still greater may be noticed in the painting of the bramble in the fresco of *St. Francis' Wedding to Poverty*.

The only other picture in this series of which it is necessary to speak is the *Crucifixion*, which is incomparably the finest of these paintings, and bears most likeness to the master's work. I am inclined to think that this composition was in great measure, if not wholly, executed by Giotto himself, though even this work shows traces of inferiority to that of the Arena Chapel in some respects; and the painting has suffered a good deal from damp and apparently, in some places, from restoration, though being unable to examine it in a very good light, I am not certain upon the latter point.

It only remains to sum up my remarks upon these works. From the considerations I have given, and many other differences on which it were too long to enter here, I am led to the inevitable conclusion, that the only composition actually painted by Giotto in the Lower Church of St. Francis at Assisi, besides the four allegorical works in the ceiling of the choir, is the *Crucifixion*, and a small *predella* to it in monochrome, representing St. Francis and four monks of the order gazing towards the cross in the above picture.

Professor Dobbert's conjecture, that Giotto visited Assisi a second time, and then designed both the allegorical pictures and those in the transept, and left them to be executed by his pupils, seems to be refuted by the excessive superiority

of the ceiling frescoes to those of the transept, and the unlikeness of the former to the work of any of Giotto's pupils. It must be repeated here that there is not at present the slightest evidence of Giotto having been twice at Assisi, and that the professor's conjecture is not supported by anything but Crowe's idea that the transept frescoes were done at a later period than those of the ceiling.

I should have liked to dwell a little upon the other interesting portions of the town, of its quaint and often beautiful architecture, or of the many glorious walks along the mountain to be taken therefrom, but it would lead me too far from my subject, and I must be content with mentioning that it would be difficult to find more impressive hill scenery than that which surrounds Assisi, though it is of a somewhat gloomy character. The olive and the cypress are almost the only trees to be seen on one side of the town, and the mountains slope abruptly down to a narrow valley, through which foams a mountain torrent. In the immediate neighbourhood are the spots connected with the actual life of St. Francis and Sta Chiara (the saint who was the first of his female followers), the most interesting of which is the Hermitage of St. Francesco, lying in a cleft of the mountain, some two miles from the town. Many another church and monument is there of interest in this place, but we have outstayed our space, and, we fear, our readers' patience; so let us take the midnight train to more civilised Florence, throw behind us the dreamy idleness of the few hours we have spent amongst traditions of saint and miracle, and leave Assisi sleeping upon the mountain-side in its accustomed solitude. In one last look from our comfortable first-class carriage, we see the convent and the sharp points of its surrounding cypresses, dark against the clear starlight, and in another instant the train has swept on out of the shadow of the mountain, and we are in the nineteenth century once more.

CHAPTER XII.

GIOTTO'S LATER WORK AT FLORENCE.

"The characteristics of Power and Beauty occur more or less in different buildings, some in one and some in another; but all together, and all in their highest possible relative degrees, they exist, as far as I know, only in one building in the world, the Campanile of Giotto."—JOHN RUSKIN, *The Seven Lamps.*

THE later work of Giotto at Florence falls into two distinct divisions, the one consisting of his frescoes and his great panel picture of the *Coronation of the Virgin*, the other of his sculpture and architecture, both of which last have as their sole remaining example, the Campanile, in the Piazza del Duomo, better known as "Giotto's tower." The limits of my space compel me to speak very briefly upon each of these divisions, which I regret the less because they are by far the best known and most frequently written about of Giotto's works; and when Mr. Ruskin has put forth his whole strength in description, an inferior writer may be well pardoned for unwillingness to make his inferiority manifest. With this brief word of apology then, I speak first of the frescoes in the Santa Croce.

Giotto painted four chapels here, but the only remaining frescoes are those in the chapels of the Peruzzi and the Bardi, the former containing scenes from the lives of St. John the

Evangelist and St. John the Baptist, the latter representations of the life and death of St. Francis. Both these chapels have suffered a good deal from restoration, especially that of the Bardi, which has been so coarsely repainted as to have entirely lost all beauty of colour, and which I shall not therefore dwell upon in detail.

The top fresco on the right hand wall of the Peruzzi Chapel, has also been quite ruined by coarse repainting, and when examined with a good glass shows a coarse black line round every portion of the composition, not unlike that used by the disciples of a certain modern school of decorative painting, who seek to gain the effect which their incompetence otherwise denies them by outlining their compositions in this manner.

The two lower frescoes on the right hand wall, however, representing respectively the Healing of Drusiana by St. John, and the Ascension from the grave of that Evangelist, though they have been a good bit restored, have had the restoration, carefully and sparingly done, and retain still a beauty of colour as great as is to be found in any of Giotto's works. The chief differences observable between these frescoes and those of the earlier years are such as we might expect to find in the later work of an earnest painter, and are briefly as follows:— First, a loss of the semi-burlesque spirit observable in the Arena Chapel, and not wholly absent from the four great frescoes of the Lower Church at Assisi. All is grave and dignified in treatment; the action proceeds in a still vivid, but not eager, manner; it is the difference between the *Stabat Mater* played on the organ, and "The Campbells are coming," on the bagpipes of a Highland regiment. Allied to this change, and dependent upon it, is the loss of a good deal of the incidental drama of the composition, a certain diminution of interest in the spectators, who are now more parts of the general scene, and less individual characters affected in

different ways by what is happening. The composition gains, perhaps, in dramatic unity, gains certainly if judged by the canons of later art, but loses in dramatic intensity, and, it seems to me, in truth to life. Again, there is much more composition, and that of a more elaborate kind, than in the Arena work: the figures are larger proportionately to the fresco in which they are placed, and possessed of a uniform grace and dignity which were absent from the earlier frescoes. Increased knowledge of form and power of arrangement, is seen in the figures of the men, and the treatment of the draperies; the latter especially, while still being drawn with comparative breadth and simplicity, have gained in beauty of line, and slightly in attention to the form beneath them. Lastly, there is to be noticed an advance in the treatment of colour which is the most important of all the changes. It is with the greatest diffidence I speak upon this point, as it is nearly impossible, in the dim light of this chapel (whose only window is covered with a yellow curtain), to be sure of what is the painter's original work and what is restoration; but while making every allowance for error, it seems to me that there is here shown, in places where the work is almost certainly genuine, a great increase in the power of gradation of colour, a capability of making each portion more beautiful in itself, besides being beautiful as a part of the whole. There is not found in these frescoes (in the Peruzzi), any longer those broad masses of comparatively ungradated tint which are so common in the Arena series; and there is further to be found an extension of the scale of colouring, a power of combining more delicate and more varied hues than in the earlier frescoes.

The whole tone of the picture is sharper and more mellow than before, and though this is by no means an unmixed gain, for much of the crystalline purity and freshness of the earlier pictures is lost thereby, yet on the whole the gain is greater

than the loss, much in the same way that though we may regret the absence of the bright eye and ardent impetuosity of youth, we must needs give greater honour to manhood which has fulfilled the promise, though it may have lost something of the freshness, of "the wild gladness of morning."

On the left hand wall of this chapel there are also three frescoes of which the uppermost is of comparatively little importance; the remaining two are—first, *The Birth of John;* second, *The Daughter of Herodias dancing before Herod.* The lower of these is a good deal faded, but (I believe) not at all restored, and both are of exceeding beauty. In the first, the picture is divided into two parts by pillars supporting the section of a house similar to those of which Giotto generally formed his interiors. The larger portion of the fresco represents the mother of the Evangelist lying upon her bed surrounded by friends and attendants, and in the smaller part the nurse is presenting the infant to the father, who is apparently deep in thought. The figure of the nurse holding out the child, and all the attendants and friends who press round the bed, are full of interest, and the whole composition of the picture very fine.

More beautiful, however, to me, is the lowest fresco of Herodias, if it were only for the figure of the violin (for it is a sort of violin) player, a figure whose grace and truth of action has, I think, never been surpassed.

In this picture the daughter of Herodias is represented twice, the first time in the main body of the fresco, dancing in front of the table at which the king is seated, while in the centre an attendant brings in the Baptist's head upon a dish, and offers it to the king; and again on the extreme right of the fresco, where, in a sort of inner room, the dancer kneels to her mother, and presents her with the head.

There are in the Bardi Chapel frescoes of Sta. Chiara and St. Louis, also by Giotto; but both have been restored

especially the latter,* which is wholly ruined thereby. Formerly in the Baronzelli Chapel, but now in a small room close to the sacristy, hangs the greatest masterpiece of our artist upon panel; indeed the only one of his works executed in that manner which can fairly be called worthy of his powers.† This is the famous *Coronation of the Virgin*, a picture in five compartments, the four outer ones of which represent a choir of angels with various musical instruments, and an attendant company of saints, prophets, and martyrs, while the centre division shows the Virgin dressed as a bride seated upon a throne, and bending her head to receive the crown from Christ.

It is wholly beyond my power to convey to my readers any idea of the exceeding loveliness of this work, and no description could, I think, give more than a faint shadow of its beauty. Descriptions of pictures are stupid things at the best, and when the attempt is made to describe a work whose beauty consists less in any hard tangible perfection of form and colour, than in a delicate purity of feeling and an intense belief in the subject treated of, when we have to catalogue as beauties, the expressions of a choir of angels, and the raptures of the surrounding saints, words seem totally inadequate to the task.

Perhaps some faint idea of the picture may be gained by likening it to the *Paradise* of Fra Angelico, which hangs in the Uffizi Gallery, and which is probably familiar to most of my readers, if only through the medium of the innumerable copies which have been made of the figures of the playing

* Mr. Ruskin has here been mistaken in asserting that this fresco has not suffered from restoration; a good opera glass will satisfy any one of this fact, as the restoration has not only been great in amount, but most execrable in the quality of its work.

† Amongst those with which I am personally acquainted I hear on good authority that the panel picture know as the Stefaneschi altar-piece, at Rome, is of exceeding beauty.

and singing angels which surround its frame. Fancy these Angelico figures enlarged slightly and made human, instead of angelic; fancy them arranged in rows, one above the other, the first row kneeling, and the second standing behind them, while further in the background, tier above tier, rise the heads of prophets and martyrs almost to the top of the golden background. Put two pictures of this sort on each side of a central one of *Christ and the Virgin*, lower Fra Angelico's key of colour just a little, till his pinks, blues, and yellows have shades of neutral colour toning them down, let the types of the saints and angels be rather heavier in the jaw, and broader in the face than his, and then you have the bones, so to speak, of Giotto's *Coronation*.

More than this I cannot tell you of the beauty of this picture, and it were useless to dwell upon the tender gravity of the singing angels, the devotion of the listening saints, the exquisite balance of the groups, and the pure brightness of the colouring. In a picture the whole of whose effect depends upon such subtle combination of faith and skill as does this *Coronation*, it is worse than useless to attempt to catalogue its merits as if for an auctioneer's programme. It is best to say, simply, that in a devotional age a great painter put forth his whole strength, to embody his faith in the loveliest design he could conceive, and that the result was worthy of him.

In the cloisters of the S. Maria Novella there are some frescoes attributed to Giotto much injured by damp, and one, the *Birth of the Virgin*, spoilt by restoration; one, however, remains, of great beauty, which in its leading figures is as fine as any of Giotto's work; this is the *Meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate*. The leading figures here are fortunately comparatively uninjured by the damp, though Anna's blue robe has lost a little of its colour; the faces are full of expression, tender and loving to a degree,

and the attitudes of both figures both graceful and natural. In this work the painter has gained a nearer approach to female beauty than in any other fresco which I have seen. After a long and careful examination of these frescoes I am unwillingly forced to come to the conclusion that they are not by Giotto, but are later works of his school. I say unwillingly, for it is with the greatest reluctance that I differ on this point from Mr. Ruskin, who has in one of his small series, called *Mornings in Florence*, expatiated very enthusiastically upon the merit of these works. The technical reasons which have most certainly lead me to this conclusion can hardly be stated so as to interest the general reader, but the main points which are evident upon the surface of the matter are—1st, the comparative crudeness and poorness of colour in three out of the four frescoes, a crudity which is scarcely to be accounted for by any amount of restoration. The colour is not so much violent as it is weak and uninteresting; 2nd, the exaggeration in gesture never used by Giotto in subordinate figures, and a certain wilful ugliness of attitude which I have never found in that painter's works; 3rd, the difference in the drawing of the drapery, which is sharp and thin in its folds, the folds being far more numerous than in Giotto's work, and their angles much more abrupt. The last difference is one of beauty. As far as I know Giotto was incapable of drawing a face of the slender rounded type such as Anna's in the second of these frescoes which I have referred to. Both the drawing of that face and its delicate modelling belong to another and a later hand than his. Lastly, I may state for whatever it is worth, that I heard only a few days since that it is probably the case, according to the best opinion of the archæologists, that the cloister in which these frescoes are, is of a later date than that of Giotto's death. If this be so of course it sets the matter at rest, but whether it be so or not I think a careful examination of the frescoes will satisfy

FLORENCE,

Showing Giotto's Campanile, and the "Duomo."

any one interested in the matter that they cannot fairly be attributed to our artist. It must be remembered that the work of the Giotteschi, as they are called, is exceedingly puzzling and confused and liable to be mistaken very easily even by one who is devoting his whole attention to the subject. Mr. Ruskin has in two former instances been led to attribute works to Giotto which are not by that artist according to almost indisputable evidence: the instances I allude to are, one in speaking of the frescoes at Avignon as by this artist, the other in attributing to him a picture now discovered to be by Lorenzo Monaco in the Uffizi Gallery.

THE CAMPANILE.

From my window *au troisième*, in the Piazza del Duomo, the look-out this gray April afternoon cannot be called altogether gay. The sellers of flowers and oranges have withdrawn well into the shelter of their little awnings, through which the rain slowly trickles upon the bright mass of fruit; in the great square, the restless population of Florence move aimlessly to and fro with cloaks muffling their faces; there are five close cabs stationed just beneath my window, the drivers of which sit on their respective boxes, beneath the shelter of four large green umbrellas and one blue one; behind them the Baptistery lifts its conical roof by the side of the scaffolding which marks the restoration of the cathedral, and beyond and above everything the Campanile* in the square of the Signoria raises its grim castellated head, dark and threatening. One building alone refuses to succumb to the influences of cloud and rain, refuses to lose its beauty or be deprived of its colours; its delicate traceries, and its shades of red, yellow, black, white, and green marble still standing out clearly perceptible through the heavy atmosphere. This is the building with the account of which

* Of the *Palazzo Vecchio*.

closes the story of Giotto's life; this is the last and greatest achievement of that great genius who joined to his skill of hand a heart tender enough to enter into every human weakness, and sympathies which extended to the animal and vegetable creation, and drew, with as much simple fidelity and honest enjoyment the dog watching the sheep and the oxen drawing the wain, as the sufferings of the Saviour, or the faith of the disciples.

In shape the Campanile is a square tower without buttress of any kind, rising 292 feet straight from the pavement of the piazza. It has four stories, but does not diminish towards the top, the only difference being that the windows increase in size, and in this way an appearance of superior lightness is gained by the upper stories. The style of the architecture is Gothic in so far as it makes use of the pointed arch, but can hardly be described as such without giving a false impression to those who are accustomed to the Gothic of the north; and who think of that style as one of varied, if somewhat gloomy, masses, of irregular arches, pinnacles, and buttresses; colourless save for the lichen that grows between the grey stones, and owing their beauty more to the unwearied inventiveness of their builders' fancy than to any symmetrical unity of design.

It seems to me that this Campanile, as does the cathedral, partakes much more of the Lombardic element than the Gothic, especially in its use of coloured marbles, which are here employed throughout the whole surface of the tower. One thing is certain, that whatever be the style of the architecture it has a character of its own which renders it a thing apart. In the course of many years' travel in every quarter of the globe, I have come upon but one building which had at all the same sort of power over the imagination which is possessed by this tower of Giotto. That structure was the Taj, at Agra, which in its exquisiteness of finish, its delicacy

of involved ornament, its perfectly unsullied whiteness, and above all, in its completeness of design, resembled the Florentine Campanile, though for beauty of proportion, no less than for that of colour, the Indian tomb must yield precedence to the Italian bell-tower. The Taj, too, owes much of its effect to the beauty of its surroundings; to the stately entrance, the long paved approach of white marble, the great daïs of the same, on which the tomb stands, and last, not least, to thick rows of dark cypress trees which surround it to right and left, and toss their fretted spires towards the sky, a hundred feet below the great dome. The Campanile has no such proud surroundings, no such adventitious helps to its beauty, but stands in simple strength, in the busiest square in Florence, in the midst of the fruit-sellers and flower-sellers, where the street boys can play at hide-and-seek round its base, and wonder idly perhaps at the inlaid marbles. In either case the surroundings are such as one should be loth to change; for the tomb which marks the pride and love of an Eastern monarch, the quiet inclosed garden, with its marble terraces and clustering groups of cypress; and for the Campanile—which was the last gift of a great artist to his native city—the busy square, the thronging people, the hundred cries of Florence sounding about its base, and fading into a faint scarce-heard murmur long ere they reach the great overhanging battlements, round whose massive sculpture resound only the whispering of the breeze and the fluttering of white-winged birds.

The building is in four stories, the two lowest of which are entirely without windows, the first being adorned with bas-reliefs by Giotto, and with statues by Donatello and others. Intermediate between the lowest series of bas-reliefs and the statues, are four series of bas-reliefs, each seven in number, representing the beatitudes, the works of mercy, the virtues, and the sacraments.

The second and third stories have each two pointed-arched

windows of the same size and design, each of which is divided in the usual Gothic manner by a centre shaft. This shaft is of exquisite delicacy, in design a richly carved spiral, ending in a capital, from which spring two trefoiled arches. The sides of these windows are also enriched with a similar shaft, then a rich border of mosaic, inclosed again by a spiral, terminating in a second pointed arch which forms the outer border to the window, above which is a triangular canopy thickly carved. The whole of these windows, with the exception of the mosaic band, are executed in white marble, and surrounded by slabs of green serpentine and red porphyry.

The fourth story has but one window, rather larger than both those in the second or third story, and divided by two spirals instead of one. It is noticeable that the sides and canopy of this highest aperture are comparatively simple in form and devoid of sculpture, which practically ceases with the third story. Giotto was too thorough an artist to put elaborate sculpture at a height where it could not be seen, and preferred, instead of substituting coarser work, to depend for the beauty of this upper story, almost entirely upon the effect of boldly designed mosaic. Instead, therefore, of a single narrow band of mosaic above the arch of the window, there are in the fourth story four comparatively wide ones, and above this the triangular space beneath the plain arch is filled with the same work, as are also the spaces beside and above the canopy. Above the canopy is a still broader band of mosaic, on which the jagged arches of the battlements seem to rest; and above these again, a last band of mosaic is surmounted by a gallery of white marble about six feet high, pierced with quartre-foils along its whole length.

It is wholly impossible to describe the delicacy and finish which the crest of this campanile possesses; the eye is led on from story to story, the mosaic being used more and more freely, the sculpture more sparingly, as the ascent is made, till at last the sculpture ends in one perfectly shaped

window, and the mosaic blossoms forth like a flower into fullest beauty. Gradually the massive base, with its dark bas-reliefs, changes into lighter sculpture, with backgrounds of blue marble, then into figures of the saints, prophets, and patriarchs, breaking the uniformity of which are two long vertical pierced panels of quartre-foils in circles, serving to give light to the interior, but not telling as windows, then two rich bands of mosaic carry on the effect up to the first range of windows. There is no difference between the first and second stories, except that the lower one has a rich band of sculpture beneath the window, which is replaced by plain marble in the second; but above the second, as I have said, the sculpture ceases to be the main feature, the mosaic takes its place, and succeeds in carrying out the unison of rich work and lightness of effect in a way which is as novel as it is beautiful.

A few words must be said of the famous range of bas-reliefs, the lowest, all of which were designed by Giotto, though he only lived to execute two. This series is twenty-eight in number, exclusive of those on the small half towers which form the corners of the Campanile. They represent first the creation of man and woman, then the gradual development of knowledge, the gradual increase of man's power over nature, and discovery of his own capacities. Of three of these, illustrations are given which may be relied upon for fidelity to the main points of the design, though they do little justice to the exquisite delicacy of the work.

These bas-reliefs are in lozenge form, about eighteen inches in height and slightly less in breadth, and entirely surround the tower; nearly the whole of these were sculptured by Luca della Robbia and Andrea Pisano, to whom was entrusted the carrying out of Giotto's designs.

I shall not endeavour here to classify these reliefs according to their authorship for two reasons; one, that the carrying out of Giotto's design, whether by Andrea Pisano, Luca della

Robbia, or any other sculptor, is as to each special relief a pure matter of conjecture, and is besides little connected with the subject I have in hand; and the other reason is that this classification, though attempted with great ingenuity, and after close investigation by Mr. Ruskin, in his pamphlet on the "Shepherd's Tower," appears to me to have yielded no satisfactory results, but rather to have involved the subject in further obscurity, insomuch as it has led him to attribute various reliefs in the series to Giotto's own hand, wholly on internal evidence, and that moreover in my judgment of a most unsatisfactory nature. I content myself, therefore, with observing that the three first frescoes of the series and the one representing the drunkenness of Noah are almost certainly the work of a different hand to that of the rest of the bas-reliefs, and that that hand has probably modified Giotto's original design to a considerable extent in the relative importance of the landscape portions of the composition.

In these last designs of Giotto's life, there is a curious recurrence to the ideas of his earliest time, a curious delight in depicting natural objects, and treating his subject from the humorously dramatic point of view; such as indeed he never altogether lost, but which lies very much in the shade in the later frescoes of this master. In fact, in some of these bas-reliefs, the comic element almost entirely predominates, as, for instance, in that which is entitled *Logic*, in which two furious disputants stand face to face, the countenances inflamed with passion, one apparently being just on the eve of proceeding to the *argumentum ad hominem*, the other rapping an open book querulously with his finger. Others show a depth of perception of character which perhaps would hardly have been expected from the artist, as in the relief of *Arithmetic*, where a master is instructing two of his pupils in that gentle science. One of the boys is evidently intelligent enough, and bends happily over his book; the other is of a heavy bovine type, and is listening with a puzzled expression to the master's

THE FIRST ARTS. BAS-RELIEF DESIGNED BY GIOTTO.

On the Campanile, Florence.

explanation. Of all the designs, perhaps the finest are simply narrative, and of such, the three first of the series, the creation of Adam, the creation of Eve, and the relief called *The First Arts*, are singularly beautiful. It should be noticed here that Giotto's knowledge of, and skill in depicting, trees, made great advances from the time of the frescoes in the Arena to that of these reliefs. No doubt something must be allowed for the genius of those who executed the reliefs; but if they were done from Giotto's designs, and there is a concensus of opinion that such was the case, the advance is a very marked one. I am the more inclined to believe in this progress as in the drawing of the brambles, in the great fresco of *St. Francis wedding Poverty* in the Lower Church of Assisi, there are the elements of such leaf and bough drawing as are seen here; and even at Assisi, the advance from the Arena, in the drawing is very evident. Especially fine in design, and as far as it goes, true to nature, is the drawing of the vine in the relief of *Noah's Drunkenness*, or as it is sometimes called, the *Convention of Wine*. The drawing of the leaves and grapes, and their disposition in the panel, is perhaps the finest piece of good sculptural design to be found at such an early date; and I should have selected this relief for reproduction, had it not been, owing to Giotto's intense perception of the essential meaning of his subject, so unpleasing in the degradation of the drunken figure, as to unfit it for purposes of illustration.

Our artist's sympathy with animal life, also revives in these works in its full force, and may be seen in many instances. Look for example at the fresco of ploughing, where the driver is guiding the oxen by the simple, yet perfectly efficient plan, of twisting the tail round his wrist, and pulling it one way or the other, when he wishes to turn. Or look at the puppy in the bas-relief of *Shepherd Life*, as he sits outside the patriarch's tent watching the sheep file past. What a sense of comical responsibility and mischief there is in his face, the quintessence, so to speak, of puppydom. Or look, for another

kind of truth, at the action of the horse in the fresco of *Riding*, and the manner in which the rider is urging him with hand and voice at the same time, and the wind is blowing out his mantle behind. There is a curious circumstance with regard to this last design, which I discovered by chance a few weeks ago when walking in the sculptor's rooms of the British Museum. That is, that there is a figure in one of the great friezes there, not that of the Parthenon, but the next in beauty, that of the Erectheum, which is almost identical in the figure of its man and his action with this of Giotto's. The very lines of the cloak blowing out behind are almost identical, and the grasp of the rider's knees, the pose of his figure and the outstretched arm (what is left of it in the Greek sculpture, it has been taken just below the elbow) are all exactly similar. The whole spirit of the Greek frieze is as vivid in Giotto's work as it is in the original sculpture, executed more than a thousand years before. It merely shows the extraordinary unity of all good art, that a mediæval Italian, working purely from nature and life, should be able to arrive by himself, at a representation which has all the feeling of that which is acknowledged to be the finest art the world has ever seen. It must be noticed that where Giotto falls short of his Grecian predecessor, is chiefly in the nobility of the types both of man and horse. Giotto's horse is going, and his man is urging him as certainly as in the frieze, but his horse is comparatively a common every-day cabhorse and is going in something of the same rocking-time manner we may see in Hyde Park any day of the week. And the man is like most of Giotto's men, a very ordinary individual, somewhat of what hunting men call "a tailor," perhaps, though he is evidently accustomed to riding. The Grecian sculptor has refined the types of both man and horse, and given the latter a grand sweeping action, such as would be promptly stopped by the police, if indulged in within the limits of the park. This difference, however, is a difference in aim, not a difference in feeling; the beauty of line, and the meaning of the

RIDING. BAS-RELIEF DESIGNED BY GIOTTO.

On the Campanile, Florence.

scene are given with almost as much intensity by our artist as by the unknown sculptor who preceded him. Most unfortunately I only found this similarity too late to permit me to make use of it in the book; for a drawing of these two figures side by side would have shown the likeness and dissimilarity more than pages of description.

Many other bas-reliefs of this series are of great interest, but there is no space left for me to dwell upon them, nor are their merits other than those which I have spoken of so frequently throughout this book, of simple truth, of keen discernment, and of genuine feeling. At every step the work seems to say to us, "Here is the representation of something true;" and the artist seems to say, "I have only tried to give you facts in the most beautiful arrangement consistent with truth; if you want more, or less, why, you must go elsewhere."

And so it is that from the time when he draws the meditations of a puppy, to that in which he hangs his massive tower of coloured marble, between the earth and heaven, his work seems simple, grand, and sincere. He is not painting pictures to aggrandise himself, he is only lovingly recording what he knows, feels, or hopes. He is not above, nor below his work; his work is himself; it is himself, in joy, or sorrow, or curiosity, or surprise; in mirth, or indifference. He is human in his failings as well as in his greatness, and pretends to no greater merit, than that of doing good work in a straightforward manner.

Therefore we look back across the centuries with pleasure, to catch a glimpse of the homely figure whose dreams of beauty were mingled with tenderness and mirth, who lived in a coarse age, and made coarse jokes at odd times; but who walked hand in hand with Dante, as great, if not as sublime a genius, and whose life, as we can read it in his paintings, was one of sympathy with all things living, and perfect devotion to his art. Neither a Philistine, nor a humbug, he seems to have trod the narrow path of art with secure footsteps, a

good workman, as well as a great imaginative painter; a merry as well as an honest man. Such are the men whom Art wants nowadays, as it wanted them then, those who are men as well as artists, who will not dream in courtly isolation of beauties which never existed, but will go down into the markets, and the streets, where men sin and sorrow, or by the rivers and fields, where they toil and hope, and use their genius to brighten the facts of every day, to interpret the strange gleams of beauty, which fall here and there upon a weary world.

I like to think that that Campanile of "porphyry and jasper" was not raised by one who dwelt amidst cold dreams of architectural porportion, and gave his life to the designing of geometrical ornament, but by the man who could feel the humour of the dog, the patience of the oxen, and love to have such things carved about the base of his tower; and as I sit here in its very shadow, it seems to me as if the most fitting meed of praise with which to conclude an essay on the old painter, is, not that he painted the purest and loveliest frescoes in the world; not that he raised above Florence a tower, which has been the wonder and delight of all succeeding ages, but that he was the first to show by his work, that Art was useful to man, not only as a teacher, but as a friend.

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